

The Savior's Farewell

comfort from the ^upper room

Martyn McGeown



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*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
always in every prayer of mine for you all making request
with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the
first day until now; being confident of this very thing,
that he which hath begun a good work in you will
perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.
(Phil. 1:3-6)*

Contents

Introduction 1

Part One

The Disciples' Advantage in Jesus' Departure

1 Jesus Comforts His Disciples' Troubled Hearts
(John 14:1–3) 9

2 Knowing the Way to the Father
(John 14:4–6) 21

3 Seeing the Father in the Son
(John 14:7–11) 35

4 Believers Doing Greater Works Than Jesus
(John 14:12–15) 49

5 Jesus Promises Another Comforter
(John 14:16–18) 61

6 God Abiding With Us in the Sphere of Love
(John 14:19–24) 72

7 The Comforter's Teaching Ministry
(John 14:25–26) 86

8 Jesus' Bequest of Peace
(John 14:27) 99

9 Jesus' Parting Determinations
(John 14:28–31) 109

Part Two

Spiritual Fellowship with Jesus Christ

10 The True Vine and Its Branches
(John 15:1–3) 123

11 Abiding In Christ the Vine
(John 15:4–6) 136

12	Christ's Words Abiding In Us <i>(John 15:7–8)</i>	153
13	Abiding In Christ's Love <i>(John 15:9–11)</i>	166
14	Jesus Calls Us His Friends <i>(John 15:12–15)</i>	180
15	Chosen By Jesus Unto Fruitfulness <i>(John 15:16–17)</i>	192
16	Forewarned of the World's Hatred <i>(John 15:18–21)</i>	205
17	The World's Inexcusable Hatred For Christ <i>(John 15:22–25)</i>	218
18	The Comforter Testifying of Christ <i>(John 15:26–27)</i>	231

Part Three

Warnings and Encouragement about the Future

19	The Disciples Cast Out and Killed <i>(John 16:1–4a)</i>	245
20	Christ's Expedient Departure <i>(John 16:4b–7)</i>	260
21	The Comforter Reproving the World <i>(John 16:8–11)</i>	271
22	The Spirit Guiding Into All Truth <i>(John 16:12–15)</i>	284
23	Jesus' Instruction About Two Little Whiles <i>(John 16:16–22)</i>	296
24	The Dawning of a New Day <i>(John 16:23–28)</i>	309
25	The Disciples' Premature Enthusiasm <i>(John 16:29–32)</i>	323
26	Christ Overcoming the World <i>(John 16:33)</i>	335

Introduction

In John 13 Jesus eats a final meal with his twelve disciples. The end of the Passion Week, the week of his sufferings, is fast approaching. Jesus has been very busy over the previous days. He had entered Jerusalem on a donkey to the acclaim of an excited crowd of Passover pilgrims, who viewed his entrance as signifying the coming of a king. They were right, of course, but the king was not the one they expected. Instead of a mighty warrior riding triumphantly into the holy city on a white steed, a king appeared who is “just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zech. 9:9). When the people cried out, “Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matt. 21:9), a cry echoed by the little children, then Jesus’ enemies, the chief priests and scribes, were “sore displeased” (v. 15) and commanded Jesus to restrain his disciples’ praises.

Hosanna means “Give salvation now,” “Salvation now, please,” or “Save us now, we pray.” The people of Jerusalem did not understand that the salvation Jesus was bringing was not political emancipation from the hated Romans, but spiritual deliverance from the guilt, pollution, and power of sin, which Jesus would accomplish by his sufferings and death on the cross. In fact, the loud Hosannas turned into cries of “Away with him, crucify him” by the end of the week when Jesus, as John the Baptist had prophesied, became “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Indeed, the Passover pilgrims might well have been bemused when, instead of overthrowing the Roman occupiers of Jerusalem, Jesus wept over the doomed city (Luke 19:41–44). These are hardly the

The Savior's Farewell

actions of a military commander coming to deliver them from the heathen oppressor!

Jesus spent much of the Passion Week teaching the people for the last time, as well as instructing his disciples privately. Many of these events are well known to the reader of the New Testament gospel accounts. Jesus cursed the barren fig tree as a sign of the doom of fruitless, hypocritical professors of faith not only in Israel but in every age. Jesus cleansed the temple of ungodly and avaricious buyers, sellers, and money changers. Jesus confounded the Pharisees, scribes, lawyers, and Sadducees who tried to tempt him with difficult questions and dilemmas. Jesus told a number of important parables: the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20), the pounds (Luke 19), the wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21), and the king's wedding feast (Matt. 22). Jesus pronounced woes upon the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23), and he gave instruction to his disciples on the signs of his coming and warned them to be watchful (Matt. 24–25).

Jesus' instruction and behavior during the Passion Week also intensified the conflict between him and the religious leaders of Jerusalem, who already hated him and sought his destruction. About halfway through the week, one of the twelve, Judas Iscariot, approached the enemies of Jesus. Alienated in his wicked mind against the Master, and also greedy of gain, he offered to betray Jesus to the chief priests, who, glad for his offer, "covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. 26:15). Now the treacherous Judas waited for an opportunity to commit his foul deed, but "not on the feast day," urged his co-conspirators, lest there be an uproar among the people. Nevertheless, Christ our passover must be sacrificed, not according to the timetable proposed by Jesus' enemies, but according to the decree of Jesus' sovereign Father.

Jesus, mindful of all these things, readied himself for the last supper, sending some of his disciples to make preparations for the meal in an undisclosed location. Having gathered the disciples into an upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus acts in ways that greatly unsettle the disciples. He washes the disciples' feet, which was an act of

Introduction

great, unparalleled humility, as well as an act that humbled the disciples in their foolish, self-seeking pride. Peter, as might be expected, reacted impetuously, first refusing to permit Jesus to wash his feet, and then insisting that Jesus wash his feet, his hands, and his head (John 13:6–9). In connection with the foot washing, Jesus warned the disciples that one of their number was not washed from his sins: “Ye are clean, but not all” (v. 10), something the disciples did not immediately understand.

Following the foot washing, the disciples ate the Passover meal with their lord, at which meal Jesus revealed that one of the disciples would betray him. Although he gave Judas Iscariot the sop (a piece of bread dipped in a bitter sauce) and charged that wicked man, “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27), the other disciples did not grasp the significance or even identify the traitor until he appeared in the Garden of Gethsemane hours later. They imagined that Jesus had sent him on an errand for the relief of the poor (v. 29).

After Judas departed into the night (v. 30), Jesus instituted the Lord’s supper, which is recorded not in the gospel according to John, but in the synoptic gospels (Matt. 26:26–30; Mark 14:22–26; Luke 22:17–20). Words such as “This is my body” and “This is my blood” (Matt. 26:26, 28), while comforting to us, were deeply disturbing for the eleven disciples, who could scarcely comprehend what Jesus could mean by the eating of his body and the drinking of his blood.

Jesus begins his actual farewell in John 13:31: “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him,” and he continues speaking, with occasional interruptions, until the end of chapter 16. Nevertheless, since John 14–16 constitutes a unit, I do not deal with the final verses of chapter 13 in this book, nor do I treat the sublime prayer of chapter 17, traditionally known as Christ’s high priestly prayer. Instead, this book is an exposition of chapters 14–16, often identified as the upper room discourse.

Two things, however, are important to mention by way of introduction to chapters 14–16. First, in John 13:33 Jesus begins to explain his departure, which is the major theme of chapters 14–16,

The Savior's Farewell

especially chapter 14: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say unto you" (John 13:33). Peter especially objects to these words, demanding to know where Jesus is going and why he cannot follow, and proudly boasting that he will die as a martyr for Jesus's sake rather than be separated from him (v. 37). In response to Peter's foolish boast, Jesus utters a warning, recorded in more detail in the synoptic gospel accounts, which is the second important thing that must be mentioned: "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice" (v. 38).

Jesus is departing. Peter will deny Jesus three times. One of the disciples will betray Jesus. No wonder that at the beginning of John 14 the disciples' hearts are troubled. It is to soothe the disciples in their trouble, and to prepare them for the future, that Jesus utters the words of this most sublime of discourses.

The three chapters, John 14–16, that make up the upper room discourse can be neatly divided. In chapter 14 Jesus, having introduced the subject of his imminent departure in chapter 13:33, begins to explain and apply that truth to the disciples' troubled hearts. Jesus' approach is to comfort his anguished disciples by explaining to them the advantages that accrue to them because of his departure. What they view as the greatest misery is, in fact, the source of their greatest blessedness: Jesus goes away in order to secure everlasting salvation for his disciples. Therefore, the theme of chapter 14 is "The Disciples' Advantage in Jesus' Departure." In chapter 15 Jesus introduces a different subject, having temporarily dropped the subject of his departure. The new subject is "Spiritual Fellowship with Jesus Christ," illustrated by the relationship of branches to a vine, which, by virtue of their union with the vine and the divine husbandman's care, bring forth fruit to the Father's glory. Jesus urges his disciples to abide in him, in his word, and in his love, and he warns against the hatred of the world. Finally, in chapter 16 Jesus develops further the relationship between his disciples, the persecuting world, and

Introduction

the Holy Spirit. In this final chapter the theme is “Warnings and Encouragement about the Future.”

The teaching of John 14–16 is so profound that a preacher or writer can scarcely do justice to it. Two thousand years of commentators have not plumbed its depths of meaning. The cry of one man, awed by Jesus, is appropriate: “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). In this discourse are words that have comforted Christians for some two thousand years. Pastors have read these words to dying saints, many of whom have mouthed them from their deathbeds. These words have often been used in funeral messages to comfort the bereaved. God’s afflicted saints have rejoiced in these truths in every circumstance of life. Profound theological truth is clothed in the simplest of language, and yet who can fully comprehend the meaning! Let us, then, sit at the feet of Jesus to hear his instruction, receive his exhortation and encouragement, heed his warnings, and appropriate his comfort through faith.

PART ONE

*The Disciples' Advantage
in Jesus' Departure*



Jesus Comforts His Disciples' Troubled Hearts

(John 14:1–3)

1. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
2. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

At the beginning of John 14 Jesus' disciples need comfort and reassurance. They are like frightened little children, bewildered and confused. It seems that their world is coming to an end and that everyone on whom they relied is crumbling beneath their feet. For three and a half years these eleven men (Judas Iscariot had already departed into the night, and they did not understand why) had been Jesus' closest companions. They were his disciples or students, while he was their lord and master. They had listened to, and tried to imbibe, his teachings. They had closely observed, admired, and even worshiped him. For his sake they had forsaken everything: some of them had left their nets, Matthew had left the receipt of custom, and Jesus had promised to make them fishers of men. For his sake they had endured the opposition and suspicion of the religious leaders. They were sincere when they, with Peter, vowed to die as martyrs for his cause. They were looking forward to the revelation of his kingdom and glory.

The Savior's Farewell

But on that evening Jesus brought troubling tidings: he was going away. What did this mean? How could this be so? Where was he going? How would this affect them? Questions crowded in upon their minds, which served only to unsettle and even to horrify them.

Jesus, noticing their troubled expressions, spoke directly to their hearts: "Let not your heart be troubled" (v. 1). When we are troubled through the manifold trials of our lives, Jesus speaks the same soothing words to us, words that we always need to hear. These words contain a wealth of beautiful, profound comfort. Let us embrace them by faith.

THE TROUBLED HEARTS

Jesus perceives that his disciples are troubled in heart. To be troubled in heart is to be in the grip of deep distress. Sometimes troubles are superficial or on the surface of our lives. That is true with most of our everyday trials and irritations. By the grace of God we can continue to live in the world and to fulfill our calling in the home, workplace, school, state, and church. But at other times trouble strikes at the very heart, as is the case here.

When the heart is troubled, everything is troubled. The heart is the spiritual center of a person. It is the rational center of man: we would use the word "mind." From the heart our thoughts proceed, because before we speak a word or perform an action, we conceive a thought in our hearts. Jesus recognized this in Mark 2:8: "Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" The Pharisees were reasoning evil things about Jesus in their hearts. The heart is also the emotional center of man: we use the word "heart." Not only do we think with our hearts (or minds), we feel with our hearts because emotions such as love, fear, or anger proceed from our hearts. Our hearts are the source of our affections: our heart yearns after some object so that we desire it, or our heart is repelled by some object so that we detest it. Finally, the heart is the motivational or volitional center of man: we use the word "will" or "plan" or "ambition." Why do we undertake certain actions and avoid other things? The main reason is our heart,

Jesus Comforts His Disciples' Troubled Hearts

for our heart determines our preferences. That is why Solomon urges his son, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

The hearts of the disciples of Jesus were troubled. That Jesus says, “Let not your heart be troubled,” presupposes this. The Lord does not mean, “Do not start to be troubled in heart,” but “Stop being troubled in heart.” We could liken the hearts of the disciples to the sea. Sometimes, even often, the sea is calm: the sun shines upon it, perhaps there is a gentle breeze, and everything is pleasant and at peace. But suddenly and often without warning the winds whip the waters of the sea into a frenzy so that everything is agitated, stirred up, and stormy. That is the word here translated “troubled.” Let not your hearts be agitated, confused, stirred up, perplexed, disquieted, and restless.

Jesus could see the state of the disciples' hearts. Certainly he could read their hearts, and undoubtedly fear and perplexity were etched on their faces. Inside the hearts of the disciples stirred a maelstrom of emotion: their thoughts were running to and fro in confusion, they did not know what to think or how to react, and their emotions were all over the place. The disciples were like frightened, confused little children.

Jesus knew their thoughts and he cared for his disciples. Although Jesus had enough to think about, he took upon himself their fears and sorrows. “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63:9). Our Savior has not changed: at the right hand of God, as he governs the entire universe, he never forgets his people, but he bears our burdens and understands our sorrows, even sympathizing with us in them. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15–16).

The Savior's Farewell

The reason for the disciples' troubled hearts was simple: Jesus was leaving them. In fact, Jesus would be leaving them that very night. Jesus had said upsetting things that evening. He had warned of imminent betrayal by one disciple and denial by another, but the worst thing he predicted was in John 13:33: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you." The disciples were troubled and confused at his saying, for they did not know what he meant, and they did not know where he was going. In addition, they did not know how he would go, why he would go, why they could not follow him, and how or whether he would return. Or perhaps they did know, but they did not like the answer, and they desperately tried to explain the words of Jesus away. Their beloved Lord had spoken often and repeatedly of his suffering and death. Shortly before this, he had given them bread and called it his body, and he had passed around wine and called it his blood. He had spoken of his broken body and shed blood. It was all so confusing and troubling.

And yet Jesus takes the time to comfort them. Take note: *they* do not comfort him, but *he* comforts them. The troubles of Jesus were greater than the troubles of his disciples. The Lord would be arrested, tried, condemned, and crucified. Jesus would suffer the wrath and curse of his Father on the cross, and he would die. Yes, this would be traumatic for the disciples, but it would be much worse for Jesus. Yet Jesus is more concerned about the troubled hearts of his disciples than his own sorrows.

Into the disciples' troubled hearts Jesus speaks the soothing words of verse 1, words that have cheered believers for generations: "Let not your heart be troubled." This is not a suggestion but an imperative or a command. It is not a command to start doing something but a command to stop doing something. Jesus says, "I perceive that your hearts are troubled; let that trouble cease." Or Jesus says, "I perceive that your thoughts are confused, your emotions are in disarray, and your spiritual center is in turmoil. Let there be no more confusion, disarray, or turmoil: let that trouble cease."

Jesus Comforts His Disciples' Troubled Hearts

Notice, too, that the command is not to the disciples, but to their hearts. Jesus does not say, "Do not be troubled," but "Let not *your heart* be troubled." In this way, Jesus speaks directly to the source of the disciples' trouble. The issue is not the external circumstances, which are troubling. The issue is the disciples' response, which is the troubling of their heart. Do not react, Jesus says, to the difficult circumstances of your lives with a troubled heart. Instead, trust, believe, and be at peace. He repeats the command in verse 27: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Jesus speaks the same words to believers today and to his church in every age. We hear the benediction, "Grace, mercy, and peace be granted unto you." We could rephrase that, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither be ye afraid." When we face sudden, devastating blows, our natural response is to be troubled. Our hearts are filled with fear, confusion, and agitation. Perhaps we receive a phone call from the doctor's office. Our test results confirm that we have a very serious disease so that our hearts are troubled. Perhaps we lose a loved one in death: as we make arrangements for the funeral, our hearts are troubled. Perhaps our loved one is dying, and for many days our heart is troubled, agitated, and confused. Other sorrows trouble our heart: a wayward child, the apostasy of a church member, the sudden loss of a job, the persecution by the ungodly, and especially our own sins. Our hearts are filled with disquieting thoughts, and we sense turmoil within and feelings of panic and helplessness. What shall we do? Where shall we go? How shall we cope? Our hearts are troubled.

Then Jesus speaks these words of peace. Gently he assures us, "Let not your heart be troubled" (v. 1). Do not continue to be troubled in heart, but let the trouble of your heart cease. As we put down the phone and contemplate our future treatment options, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled." As we sit by the bedside of a loved one, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled." As we bury a loved one, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled." To the saint in

The Savior's Farewell

the lonely dungeon or the martyr mounting the scaffold Jesus has said: "Let not your heart be troubled." When antichrist rages and the future for the church looks bleak, Jesus will say, "Let not your heart be troubled." If Jesus can calm the troubled sea, he can, and he will, calm our troubled hearts.

THE COMFORTING PROMISES

To comfort the disciples further, Jesus explains something about the cause of their trouble, namely, his departure. First, Jesus explains the reality of his departure. He *is* leaving. They misunderstand his destination and the purpose, but it is true: he is going away. In verses 2–3 he affirms what they had feared. In verse 2 he says, "I go," or "I am going away." In verse 3 he repeats it, "And if I go," or "And if I go away." In verse 4 he adds, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

Jesus therefore speaks of a departure or of a parting: he is going away, but the disciples are not going with him. This parting will be difficult. The disciples had been his closest companions for about three and a half years. They had rarely, if ever, left his side, but now he was leaving. They would no longer be physically together in the same place. Jesus was not going on an ordinary journey. He was not departing to a strange city or to a foreign country. He was not traveling to the Gentiles. Instead, he was going on a very long journey, a journey to heaven. To reach his celestial destination he would walk a very difficult path through suffering and death. After death he would take the path of resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand. And he would be away for a long time: in fact, Jesus has been away for some two thousand years, and we do not know the day or the hour of his return to us.

Second, Jesus describes his destination, which is the Father's house. The Father's house is the place that the Father with Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, calls home. The Father in this text is the triune God. In many places in the New Testament the Father is a reference to the triune God, not to the first person of the Trinity.

Jesus Comforts His Disciples' Troubled Hearts

We know this because he is the Father of the incarnate Son, who is the mediator of the covenant. In the being of the Trinity the first person is the Father of the second person, while in the Incarnation the triune God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To this triune Father the Son prays; this triune Father the Son obeys; this triune Father the Son worships. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he is our Father, for we are his adopted children. We will return to this point often because the upper room discourse contains profound theology about the Trinity, the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus presents a beautiful, homely conception of heaven: heaven is where the triune Father dwells in glory and majesty. Heaven is where the children of God (first Jesus, and then believers adopted in Jesus) will also dwell. Heaven is not a terrifying place but a place of love, light, joy, holiness, beauty, and glory. It is a place without sorrow, fear, trouble, or sin. It is, Jesus says, “my Father’s house.” Jesus used to live there, and he is returning there to be with his Father whom he loves.

This Father’s house, says Jesus, is roomy and spacious: “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (v. 2). The English word “mansion” might give the wrong impression to the reader, for in modern English a mansion is the house of a very wealthy person. The word that Jesus uses is better translated as “dwelling place” or “abode.” The same word is found in verse 23: “We will come unto him, and make *our abode* with him.” The emphasis is not on the luxuriousness of the dwellings (“mansions”), but on the permanence of the dwellings, for the word comes from the Greek verb “to stay,” “to remain,” or “to abide”: “many abiding places.” Do not be troubled, says Jesus, at my departure: my Father’s house is spacious, roomy, and even vast. There is more than enough room for you, for those who believe in me, and for the entire church of all ages. There is room there for the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints and for you, believing reader. What a beautiful depiction of heaven! It is a house, a home, the Father’s home, the place where we

The Savior's Farewell

fellowship with God in Christ, and a place of many rooms, many abiding places.

In addition, Jesus comforts the hearts of his disciples by describing the purpose of his departure, for his departure is preparatory. "I go to prepare a place for you," he says (v. 2). It is wonderful to hear about heaven, which is the Father's house, but the disciples might wonder, "What does the Father's house have to do with us?" The answer is that Jesus is not going to heaven in order to dwell alone, and he is not going to heaven merely to be with the Father again. And it is certainly not God's purpose that his many mansions should be unoccupied. Rather, he will bring the disciples to heaven.

To reassure them Jesus says in verse 2, "If it were not so, I would have told you." These words could be a question: "If it were not so, would I not have told you?" If there were no such place as heaven, Jesus would have told them. If heaven were not the Father's house, Jesus would have told them. If there were only a few places in heaven, Jesus would have told them. And if there had not been room for the disciples, Jesus would have told them. The reality of heaven rests on the truth of Jesus' words, and the roominess of heaven rests on Jesus' words. Certainly, we can trust in Jesus' words. What peace for troubled hearts! Contemplate heaven, think about the Father's house, dwell upon the many rooms, meditate on these things often, and trust the word of Jesus concerning them.

Nevertheless, if the disciples are to reach the Father's house, and if we are to reach the Father's house, preparation is required. The disciples were not yet ready for the Father's house, and the Father's house was not yet ready for their arrival. "I go to prepare a place for you" (v. 2). The disciples were sinners. How could they dwell in the Father's house? One of them (Peter) would deny Jesus three times before the next cockcrowing, while the rest of them would flee when Jesus would be arrested. All of them would prove to be cowards in the face of persecution.

Besides, the disciples were guilty of many sins and were by nature totally depraved. They would defile the Father's house by

Jesus Comforts His Disciples' Troubled Hearts

their presence. Better to let a dirty pig sleep in your bed than a filthy sinner defile the Father's house! The same thing is true of us. Shall guilty, filthy sinners take up their abode in the Father's house? Shall those who have broken God's commandments enter heaven? Of course not! Therefore, Jesus must prepare a place for us.

That preparation is twofold: Jesus prepares dwelling places for his disciples (and for us) and Jesus prepares us for our place, for the particular mansion assigned to us. First, Jesus prepares a place for us by his sufferings and death: that is really the first part of the meaning of "I go." In those little words "I go" there is a wealth of meaning, and in those little words "I prepare" is also a wealth of significance.

"I go," says Jesus, "to the garden of Gethsemane. There I will sweat great drops of blood while I agonize in prayer to my Father."

"I go," says Jesus, "to the hall of Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests, to be tried before the Sanhedrin: they shall beat me, spit in my face, and label me a blasphemer worthy of death."

"I go," says Jesus, "to Pilate's hall of judgment. Although he will find no fault in me, the Roman governor will hand me over to his soldiers to be scourged, mocked, beaten, crowned with thorns, and crucified."

"I go," says Jesus, "to Calvary, where I will be nailed to a cross and left to die in agony. God's wrath and curse shall fall on me and I will die."

"And I go," says Jesus, "to Joseph's tomb, where my body shall lie under the power of death for three days."

Why must Jesus go in that way? Because of sin! The guilt of sin must be removed, the pollution of sin must be washed away, and the power of sin must be broken. Jesus shall pay the full price of sin on the cross for his disciples. That is the first step in order to prepare a place for us.

Second, Jesus prepares a place for us by his resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of God, and outpouring of the Spirit. Even if the disciples' sins are forgiven, they are still not fit for heaven. They might be justified or free from guilt, and they might even be

The Savior's Farewell

sanctified or cleansed of pollution, but to live in heaven the disciples need new life: they need heavenly, spiritual life. Jesus gives that life by virtue of his resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God, so that he gives the Holy Spirit. Only one pardoned of all sin, cleansed of all sin, and filled with the Holy Spirit can dwell with God in the Father's house. That, too, is the work of Jesus.

Third, Jesus prepares a place for us by returning to take us to be with him: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (v. 3). Jesus comes for the believer at the point of death: at that point heaven is ready for our souls and our souls are ready for our particular place in heaven. The Bible teaches that when the believer dies his soul is immediately taken up to glory. But at the point of death our body is not yet ready and the new creation is not yet ready for our body. Therefore, our body rests in the dust of the earth under the power of corruption until the last day or the day of the bodily resurrection. Jesus will not be satisfied, and his work will not be complete, until he returns on the clouds of heaven to take us bodily to heaven. He does not merely want us to be in heaven (perhaps in some room somewhere), but the great desire of his heart is that we be with him: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (v. 3).

Now the disciples should understand, and we should understand too, that Christ's departure is necessary, that it is temporary, and that it is good. What the disciples see as a heart-troubling disaster, they should see rather as a blessing: "Let not your heart be troubled" (v. 1).

THE CALL TO FAITH

We have seen the disciples' troubled hearts, we know our own troubled hearts, and we have seen Jesus' comforting promises. What is the answer? Heart trouble can be soothed in only one way: by faith alone in God's promises. Jesus makes that point in verse 1: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

There are various ways to translate these words because of the

Jesus Comforts His Disciples' Troubled Hearts

ambiguity or flexibility of the Greek language: the Greek could be either indicative or imperative depending on the context. Indicative expresses a statement of fact: "You believe" is indicative. Imperative expresses a command: "Believe" is imperative. There are four possible translations therefore. First, it could be two indicatives: "Ye believe in God; ye believe also in me." Second, it could be two imperatives: "Believe in God; believe also in me." Third, it could be an indicative followed by an imperative, as in the KJV: "Ye believe in God; believe also in me." Fourth, it could be an imperative followed by an indicative: "Believe in God; ye believe also in me." The best translation is two imperatives: "Believe in God; believe also in me." That fits best with the context. Jesus commands them not to let their hearts be troubled; then he commands them to believe in God and to believe in him.

Moreover, the imperatives are present imperatives, where the meaning is a continuation of the command: "Continue to believe in God; continue also to believe in me." "Keep believing in God; keep also believing in me." In other words, Jesus is not speaking to unbelievers: he is not commanding the disciples to believe for the first time. He is commanding them to continue to believe. Only by continuing to believe will they deliver their hearts from troubling, disquieting thoughts. Jesus says this because he sees that the faith of the disciples is wavering: the troubling realities that Jesus is describing are shaking the disciples' faith, so that they doubt. These words encourage the disciples not to lose heart in the battle of faith, but to press on in full assurance of faith as the day approaches.

Notice, too, how Jesus equates faith in God with faith in himself: "Believe in God and believe also in me," or "Trust in God and trust also in me." Without faith in Jesus Christ there is no faith in God, for the only true and living God is the God and Father of Christ.

Thus we see that the soothing answer to the disciples' troubled hearts is faith. Faith is certain knowledge and assured confidence in God through Jesus Christ. Through faith we have a vital or living connection to Jesus Christ in heavenly glory. Faith lays hold of

The Savior's Farewell

the promises of God concerning Christ's going away, concerning his preparation, concerning the house of many mansions, and concerning Christ's coming again. Faith says, "I believe. I believe that these marvelous blessings are for me." Reader, do you believe that? Believe in God and believe in Jesus Christ: when your heart is troubled, cling to Christ by faith. Through faith alone you shall receive comfort.