

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 26

Encouragement for the Troubled Heart

By

Greg Laurie

Harvest Christian Fellowship

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Let's turn in our Bibles to [John 13](#). I would like to speak on encouragement for the troubled heart. Let's have a word of prayer together.

Father, we thank You for the power of the Word of God. Even though we are called to teach it, we still love to hear it. It is precious to us and we want to hear Your voice today. Help us to keep our focus clear and know what it is You want us to do. We want to be fed and built up as believers. We commit this time of Bible study to You now. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Have you ever had your world turned upside down? Maybe everything was going along wonderfully and all of a sudden, some crisis, some tragedy, something out of left field just hit you like a ton of bricks and everything changed. Well, if you have ever felt that way then you have a general idea of how the disciples felt in the upper room when Jesus dropped a bombshell on them and told them things they had never heard before. It all started out when Jesus was troubled.

[John 13:21](#) says that Jesus was troubled in spirit. Why was that significant? It was significant because Jesus was not really troubled about anything. This was the kind of guy who could be asleep in the boat while the storm was raging; who would walk through a hostile crowd even though He knew they wanted to kill Him. Jesus was always cool as a cucumber under all circumstances. And suddenly our Lord was troubled. It was, of course, because He was going to reveal to them that one of them was going to betray Him and another one was going to deny Him. This affected them immediately because He was their rock. He was the one that they looked to in all matters, and He was troubled.

I remember a number of years ago when we were over in Hawaii holding a crusade and at about four in the morning, I got a call from Bill Stonebraker, the pastor of Calvary Chapel Honolulu. He said, "Greg, turn on the TV." So I turned on the TV and every channel told of this ominous storm coming toward Oahu called "Hurricane Aniki." I think we were two nights into our crusade. The weather report said, "It is going to hit the island of Oahu. Tidal waves are going to hit." I could not believe it. Pastor Chuck and I were staying in these two little houses right on the beach that had been loaned to us. We were right in the impact zone of where this tidal wave was going to hit and I did not know what to do.

Dennis Agajanian was out there playing and he just freaked out. He said, "Greg, I was just stuck in Florida for Hurricane Andrew and I saw the devastation. It is going to be horrible. We have to go out and get food right now. Let's go get food." So we got in the car and went driving around. All the markets were closed. All I could find was Subway Sandwiches, so I bought thirty Subway sandwiches. I do not know what I was going to do with them, but I had thirty sandwiches and we brought them back to the house. The more Dennis talked to me, the more panicked I became because we had our youngest son with us who was very young. He was probably about four or something like that. Dennis was saying, "Buddy, we are going to have to tie him to a post and hold onto him."

There I was with my box of sandwiches and we were figuring out how we were going to tie my son to the post. I walked over to Chuck's place and he was in the kitchen cooking a stew. "Chuck, what are you doing?" "Oh, I am just cooking a stew." He was so calm. Then the local radio station called Chuck and he prayed: "Lord, just protect us." And the storm ended up turning. I thought, "This is something classic. I am in a state of panic buying sandwiches, and Chuck is cooking a stew!"

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This is how the disciples must have felt. They were probably freaking out like I was. You know how that can be.

Jesus had shared some really incredible things with them. He had told them that one of their own was going to betray Him. Every one of them said, “Is it I, Lord?” (cf. [John 13:24-25](#)).

Now a lot of times we think that Judas Iscariot was pretty obvious. Everyone knew who Jesus was; and all of the disciples probably had white robes except Judas, who must have had a black one. He probably had a black leather robe with the collar turned up. But the truth is that I do not think Judas was obvious at all. In fact, if Judas was as obvious as we would have thought, when Jesus said, “One of you is going to betray Me,” then they all would have stood up in unison, pointed, and said, “It is the guy in the black robe, isn’t it? We always knew.” But no, instead they said, “Is it I, Lord? Is it me?” And then the Lord identified Judas Iscariot as the betrayer.

Peter thought this would be a good opportunity to boast of his commitment to Jesus at the expense of the others. We pick the story up in [John 13:36–38](#).

36 Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me, but you will follow Me afterward.”

37 Peter said, “Lord, why can’t I follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.”

38 Jesus answered him, “Will you lay your life down for My sake? Most assuredly I say to you, the rooster will not crow until you have denied Me three times.”

If identifying Judas as a traitor was a bombshell, identifying Peter as a denier, was a thermonuclear explosion because Peter was the leader. When Peter said, “I am going fishing,” the others would say, “We are going with you.” The men looked up to Peter. His name, “Rock,” was fitting. And for him to be identified as one who would deny the Lord was something they could not grasp.

Luke gives us an interesting detail about what happened on this night. It is not found in John’s gospel. But in Luke 22, Jesus turned to Peter and said,

31 Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat.

32 But I have prayed for you that your faith would not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brothers. (cf.

[Luke 22:31–32](#))

Peter went on to say, “Lord, I am ready to die for You,” and so forth.

Can you imagine how you would feel if you were hanging around with Jesus and He turned to you and said your name twice? “Peter, Peter” or “Simon, Simon” rather. He did not use his name that He had given him. The Lord used his normal name, Simon. “You are going to have this problem. You are going to be attacked by the enemy. He wants to sift you as wheat.”

It reminds us that when the devil comes knocking in the life of the child of God, he has to ask permission first. We know, of course, that all the attacks that came against Job were screened first by the Lord, because the devil accurately understood that there was a hedge of protection around

God's servants. The Lord did not give Job more than he could handle. But at the same time, He did allow the devil's attack in his life. Satan is cunning. Jesus said, "He wants to sift you as wheat. He has been asking for you by name."

A lot of us will say, "Well, the other day the devil was really tempting me." I do not know that I have ever really been tempted by the devil. And by that I mean I do not know that Satan himself has come and tempted me. Maybe he has. I do not know if I am a big enough fish for that.

We know that Satan is a fallen angel. We know that he is not omnipresent. We know he is not omnipotent. He can only be in one place at one time. Of course we have all been tempted by his minions, by his demon powers that do his bidding.

But in this case, Satan himself was coming after Peter. The devil personally said, "I want Simon Peter." Why do you think that was? It was probably because Peter was a man who was influencing others. He was a leader.

You can be sure that the devil will set his sights on leaders. God will allow attacks in our lives but I am so glad that Jesus said, "Do not worry about it, Peter. I am praying for you." That is the same thing that we all need to know. There are attacks that can come our way, but the Lord is interceding for us as well.

Romans 8 says,

34 Who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died, and was raised to life. He is at the right hand of God interceding for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or persecution or hardship or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (cf. [Romans 8:34–35](#))

Were it not for the intercession of Jesus, we would not stand a chance. I am glad that our congregations pray for us. I am glad that we pray one for another. Right when I was coming in I ran into some of the other pastors and they said, "Let's pray for you." I appreciated that. But even more than their prayers, as wonderful as they are, is the knowledge that Jesus is interceding for me. And when the devil comes knocking I can say, "Lord, would You mind getting the door?"

Peter was going to go through some hard times. The Lord was going to allow it. Notice that Jesus said, "You are going to be hit in this way. And when you have returned, strengthen your brothers." In other words, "Peter, you are going to have a failing, but you are going to come back again" (cf. [Luke 22:32](#)). We are all going to have those times when we make mistakes and we stumble, but are we going to learn from the mistakes we have made? Jesus said, "When you have returned, strengthen your brothers" (cf. [Luke 22:32](#)). And Peter did just that.

In 1 Peter 5, he wrote:

10 And the God of all grace, who has called you through His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, He will restore you and make you strong and firm and steadfast again.

11 To Him be the power, forever and ever, amen. (cf. [1 Peter 5:10–11](#))

Peter says, “Listen, I have gone through these sufferings, through these difficulties, and now I want to help you.” Paul said pretty much the same thing in 2 Corinthians. All that he had gone through was so that he might comfort others as he had been comforted (cf. [2 Corinthians 1:4–5](#)).

When I first started out preaching I had everything figured out. I was twenty years old and I thought I had all the answers. I mean, whatever your problem was I had a quick biblical response for you. “You need to do this. Here is the answer. Why aren’t you doing it?” You should have come to me when I was twenty. I could have answered any question you would have had. Well, I am going to be fifty this December and I do not feel quite that way anymore because I have been through a few things. I have experienced a few things. Now when I look at people and the problems they are facing, I realize that God wants me to comfort them with the comfort that I have been comforted with. When you have gone through a hardship you can minister in a way that you could not have ministered prior to that. When you have gone through a difficulty, you can say, “I know what you are going through. I do not have a quick and easy answer but I care. I am listening. And let me just be here with you.”

When counseling people I have discovered that sometimes one of the best things you can do is just be there. This is especially true when a loved one has experienced—the death of a friend, a spouse, or a child. I have discovered that they do not need quick and easy answers. They need someone who will just be there with them, love them, and go through it with them. We must weep with those that weep, as the Bible says. That is not to say there is not a place for the truth of the Word of God, for indeed there is. But we want to ask the Lord to give us wisdom so that we do not just rattle off clichés, but that we think about it and pray for the right words at the right time. Scripture says, “A word that is fitly spoken is like an apple of gold in a frame of silver” ([Proverbs 25:11](#)).

Here we see that Peter was going to go through hardship and he was going to be able to help others as the result of what he had gone through.

Satan was targeting Peter because he was being groomed to be a leader in the church. And that is why Satan is targeting you. It was Spurgeon who used to say, “You don’t kick a dead horse.” And if a person is just sitting around idly, making no difference for the kingdom of God, I suppose the devil does not really need to do all that much in their lives because they are basically where he wants them to be—immobilized and ineffective. But when a man or a woman is saying: “I want to make a difference for the kingdom. Let’s reach our community. Let’s reach this place. Let’s just do something for God’s glory,” you better know that the devil is going to attack you. Just as surely as Nehemiah said, “Let’s rise up and build,” there was Sanballat who said, “Let’s rise up and oppose.” Whenever you take a bold step forward, you better brace yourself and prepare for opposition. It is not a matter of *if*; it is only a matter of *when* and *how* it is going to come.

The devil wanted to bring down Peter. Unfortunately Peter fell into his trap. He was filled with self-confidence. “Though all deny You, I will never deny You,” he said to the Lord. In Matthew’s Gospel he said, “Even if all are made to stumble, I will never be made to stumble” ([Matthew 26:33](#)). Now what caused Peter to say this was the revelation that Judas was a traitor. Peter essentially was saying, “Look, even if Judas lets You down, Lord, You can depend on me. Do not forget that my nickname is ‘Rock.’ I am going to live up to it, Lord. I am going to be here for You. You can count on me.”

You know I think it is always a mistake to boast of how much we love Jesus. I think it is a far better thing to boast of how much He loves me because my love is fickle, as is yours. Peter was

boasting of his commitment to Christ, rather than Christ's commitment to him. He was boasting of his love for Jesus, rather than the Lord's love for him. In speaking these words, Peter was not only revealing an unfounded confidence in himself, but he was really directly contradicting the prediction of Christ. He was essentially saying, "You are wrong on this, Lord. No, it is not going to happen." That is a big mistake. But I think in Peter's mind, in all fairness, he did not think he was going to fail. I think in his mind at this moment he thought, "That is the last thing that will ever take place." Mark's Gospel tells us that he repeatedly said this. It is not that he just said it once, he said it over and over again. Though it can almost sound commendable, we need to understand it was sinful because it was full of pride. The Bible says, "Pride goes before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction (cf. [Proverbs 16:18](#)).

You can look at so many of the sins that guys get into today in the ministry and I think almost all of them could be initially rooted in pride. You think, "I am going to get away with it. Maybe so and so did not get away with it, but I am going to get away with it. My case is different. My circumstances are not the same as someone else's." We find a way to rationalize it; and with arrogance, we go out and do these stupid things that we do.

Peter is making this great denial while Jesus is saying, "You are going to deny Me three times." The disciples were just absolutely freaking out. Peter is going to deny Him. Judas is going to betray Him. Their whole world as they knew it was crashing down on them. That is why the Lord needs to get things in perspective for them again, which brings us to [John 14:1-6](#). This is the context of it.

- 1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.
- 4 And where I go you know, and the way you know."
- 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"
- 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Our Lord says, "Let not your heart be troubled." This word "troubled" can be translated: agitated, disturbed, or thrown into confusion. He did not say, "Mull over your problems." He said, "Do not be troubled." Now He had been troubled Himself and they were troubled, so Jesus is not saying that there is never a place in our lives to be troubled. What He is saying rather is, "Though there is cause to be troubled, there is greater cause not to be." And He is going to share with them three principles of why they did not have to be agitated, stressed out, troubled, and thrown into confusion, because we all know there are troubles in our lives.

When you give your life to Christ, many of your troubles go away. But in all fairness, a whole bunch of other troubles come into your life, so we do not want to deny the existence of trouble. It is there. We know people go through troubles. We know that we go through troubles. When you get into the ministry, there are all kinds of troubles that come your way. You might have staff troubles. You know when you first start out, you are just stressed because you have to do everything.

I remember when I first started preaching; I led the worship, I gave the message, I locked the place up, I counseled the people—I did everything. The next thing you know, time goes by and you have a little extra money so you hire a secretary, you hire a worship leader, and you hire an associate pastor. You are able to share some of your responsibilities and that is a great relief. And then that can potentially create some new troubles because invariably when you have employees working for you, someone is going to mess up. Someone is not going to perform or they are not going to do the job that they are meant to do. I have found so many times that if you put the wrong person in the wrong place it creates a mess. Just by removing them, things improve. If you can help them find the place they really belong, it is better for everyone. If you can find the right guy that should have been in that place from the very beginning, everything just begins to flow. It is so challenging to find the right people for the right place. Help people develop their gifts and release them. Allow them to make some mistakes and learn from those mistakes so that they can grow and develop. But there can be staff problems.

And of course there can be family problems. You can be out ministering to all these people and maybe you are having problems with your own kids. I think the stories of pastors' kids are legendary. When I meet a pastor's son or daughter that is walking with God, I am so excited because we all know what it is like to have a prodigal son or a prodigal daughter. Here you are reaching all these people and your own kid is not doing it. And that is a trouble as well.

There are troubles that we face on every level. So then, what do we do? Well, we come back to what God has said here. How can we know peace? How can we not get stressed out and troubled? Jesus gives us three things to consider.

Number one, we know Jesus and we need to take God at His word. “You believe in God, believe also in Me” ([John 14:1](#)). Because Jesus is God, He knows all of our circumstances and He is able to deal with them. There is nothing too hard for Him. Nothing is so complex that He cannot unravel it. The Bible asks, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” ([Jeremiah 32:27](#)).

A. B. Simpson said,

There is no difficulty too intricate for Him to unravel. No little detail of life too petty for Him to take an interest in. There is no toil too tedious for Him to go through with us. There is no tangle too involved for Him to unthread and loose. There is no complication or difficult circumstance too extreme for Him to not be willing to take hold and lead us gently into the light.

Maybe you are facing a crisis right now. You have really been wanting to get away from your problems. You are hoping for some wisdom or some direction. Jesus is saying, “Look, you believe in God, believe also in Me. I have not brought you this far to let you down now. Do not give up. Do not lose hope. I am going to get you through this.”

This is what He is saying to the disciples: “Believe in Me, guys. Come on. I brought you this far. I know you do not understand when I say one of you is going to betray Me and Peter is going to deny Me. I know you do not understand it when I say that I am going to go away and be crucified. It sounds like the world is ending. But guys, trust Me. I know what I am doing.”

Now of course we look at this and we know exactly what He was doing. He was going to the cross to die for the sin of the world and there was no other way that this issue could be resolved. But they did not know that. When He would speak of His crucifixion and resurrection, it just

seemed to go right over their heads. So, as He is sharing these words with them it just seems like the end of everything.

He is saying, “Believe in Me.” And by the way, in the Greek this is a command. “I command you to believe in Me right now. I order you to trust Me in these circumstances.” They knew they were in danger. They knew that they might lose their lives for Him. But I do not think that is what bothered them the most because as we know from church history, His apostles died as martyrs—with the exception of John. They tried to boil him in oil, but we read that he did not cook, so he was banished to Patmos and there he wrote the book of Revelation.

The point is that these guys were all brave, courageous men. I do not think the issue was that they were afraid of danger or hardship. I think the issue for them was “Lord, we are afraid to be without You.” For us too, that is a fate worse than death. We do not want to live without Him.

Remember in John 6, when the Lord shared some words to thin out the crowds, He turned to His disciples and said: “Will you also go away?” They said, “Lord, where else shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life” (cf. [John 6:67–68](#)). These men had pledged themselves to Him. They had given everything up to follow Him and now He is saying that He is going to go away. They do not understand it, but the Lord is saying: “Trust Me on this.”

We need to do the same because sometimes things are going along beautifully in your ministry and then something unexpected happens. It might be an illness. It might be a tragedy. It might be some upset on your staff or any other thing. And you think: “How could this be a good thing? Lord, why did You let this happen to us?”

The problem is that we tend to think of the small picture. We tend to think of the immediate—what is going on in the here and now. God is looking at the big picture of what He is going to do overall. We think of today; God is thinking of tomorrow. We are thinking about comfort; God is thinking about character. We are thinking of an easy time; God is thinking of making a better man. So we need to trust Him no matter what our circumstances are, knowing that He has a purpose in what takes place in our lives.

The classic example of this is Joseph. We all know his story. He was sold by his brothers into slavery. His father made him that beautiful coat of many colors—a long sleeved tunic. Maybe he went to the brothers and kind of did a little bit of “nanny, nanny, nanny” with it. The Bible does not say. In fact, it is worth noting that there is nothing critical said about Joseph in Genesis. He went to his brothers to check up on them wearing his long sleeved robe. Obviously, he did not get out in the field and labor with them. But finally they were fed up and they said, “Let’s just kill him.” Ultimately, he was sold to a traveling group of Ishmaelite traders for twenty pieces of silver. What a horrible setback in this young man’s life. He wakes up in the comfort of his own bed; the next day he is on his way into slavery. You know the story. He is bought by a man named Potiphar. And after a little time passes, Potiphar gives him some responsibility. The next thing you know, he is running the whole house.

Things are going wonderfully. Joseph could have said, “Okay Lord, now I understand. You let this happen so I could come to this place and be used by You. I am learning how to be a servant.” Little did he know what was still ahead in his future. Potiphar’s wife started hitting on him. She was far from subtle. She just said, “Sleep with me.” Day in and day out she came to him with these temptations, probably using every technique she could muster up to pull this young, good looking man into bed with her. But he resisted and he resisted. The reason he gave was: “How

can I sin against God? And besides, Potiphar has put everything under my care and I do not want to disappoint him.”

We need more people like that who would think about God’s glory and His reputation. I wish more people would think about that before they do crazy things. How is this going to impact people if they hear that you, the leader, have fallen? Oh what a coup that is for the devil! If he could bring you down, think of the people that he could stumble, the people that he could devastate. Think of the ammo it gives to the enemy and to unbelievers so they could say, “What about that guy over there? He is the pastor and he fell into this sin.” Do not let it happen. Put up barriers around your life. Take every precaution possible.

And Joseph did that. He stayed away from her, but still she hit on him. Finally one day, she tried to pull him into bed with her and he ran. She held onto his garment and then she falsely accused him of rape. He was sent off to prison. You know the rest of the story. Through a chain of events, he ultimately became the most powerful man in the world under the Pharaoh. And when his brothers were brought before him because they needed food, they did not even recognize who he was. It would have been the ultimate moment of payback but instead he said to them, “You meant this for evil, but God meant it for good” (cf. [Genesis 50:20](#)).

We need to remember stuff like that. [Romans 8:28](#) is for us too. It is not just for us to preach but for us to believe. “All things work together for good to those that love God, the called according to His purpose.” So when that crisis hits, when that hardship hits, when that thing that does not make any sense takes place, you have to know that God is still in control of your circumstances. As a pastor, as a leader of your church, He is going to use the crisis for His glory.

I can think of setbacks in my life that were used by God to ultimately accomplish His purposes. When our church was starting to take off, we were meeting in an Episcopalian church and using their facility. They had come down to Calvary and wanted someone to come up to their church and do Bible studies. A group of guys did teach at the church and then ultimately, it ended up with me and I was doing these studies. The Lord was blessing and we began to experience some growth. I do not think these guys at this church really liked what they were seeing because they wanted control of it. They said, “We want you to come on staff and be a minister with us.” I did not see myself wearing a collar and being an Episcopalian pastor. We were sort of a church within a church, using their facility. I knew they did not like what was happening.

One day I was down at the office of Calvary Costa Mesa. I walked in and there, sitting in the chairs waiting to meet with Chuck, is the pastor of the church and one of his head elders. I was shocked to see them. I said, “What are you guys doing here?”

And they said, “We are here to see Pastor Chuck.”

“Oh really, what for?”

“To get rid of you.”

“What?”

“Yeah, we want to get rid of you. We do not want you in our church anymore and we are going to talk to Chuck about getting someone else to come in.”

I was devastated. I went up into this office and I was waiting. I knew they were meeting with Chuck and I just thought, “This is the end of my ministry. It is over with. Why did God let this happen to me? What did I do wrong? I was trying to do the right thing.” As I was calling out to the Lord, a peace just came on my heart. God really spoke to me—“I am going to take care of it.”

Then I got a call, “Greg, come into my office.” It felt like the principal just called me. I sat down. Chuck looked at me and said, “Well, I just met with those men from the church.”

I said, “Yes?”

“And they want to get rid of you.”

“Yeah.”

“Greg, it is time to find you a new church.”

“Yeah!” I said, “That is funny you should mention that because just the other day someone told me about this abandoned Baptist church. They had a split and it is an empty building. I think it is available, but it is for sale. I do not know for how much.”

He said, “Well, let’s go up and look at it.”

I said, “Okay.”

So the next day Chuck came up. I think I was nineteen, maybe twenty at that point. He was talking with the realtor and I was just sort of looking at this huge cavernous building and trying to imagine how we would use it. Then I saw Chuck pull out his checkbook. He wrote out a check and gave it to the guy. Chuck walked over to me and said, “Greg, I just wrote a check for your first few months and I have to go now. This is your church. Goodbye.” And he drove off into the sunset.

God took the worst case scenario and turned it around to bring our church into existence. If I would have had my way, I probably would have stayed in that place because it was easy. I just showed up and everything was set up for me. I did not have to worry about anything. But the Lord forced me to take a step of faith and that has happened many times since then in many things that we have done.

Maybe that has happened to you. God has actually smoked you out or you would not have done it. Oh, I know you look like the big man of faith now when you look at your ministry, but you know what really happened, right? You know the truth.

So this is what Jesus is saying, “You believe in God, believe also in Me” ([John 14:1](#)). That is reason number one why we should not be stressed out and troubled.

Here is reason number two. “In My Father’s house are many mansions” ([John 14:2](#)).

No matter what happens to you in life, it pales when you compare it with this great hope that we are going to heaven. We are going to meet the Lord one day. He has a place waiting for us. He is saying, “This is the hope I am giving to you—in My Father’s house are many mansions.” A better translation would be “dwelling places.” He probably was not talking about an actual palatial estate like you would see in Beverly Hills. Most likely He was referring to a new body that was waiting for them on the other side. He was saying, “You guys remember this: keep the eternal perspective, you are going to heaven. No matter what happens to you, you are going to heaven.” We need to remember that as well, that we are going to go to heaven. And that is such a great hope.

As you get older, that becomes more real to you. When you are young, you think, “Oh yeah, eventually.” But as you get older you think, “It might be sooner than I thought.” There are those telltale signs. The hair does not grow where it is supposed to grow and it grows in places it should never be growing. Why do we have hair coming out of our ears now? When I go to get my hair cut she spends as much time cutting my ears as my head. That is humiliating. I used to have a nice wave, now I just have beach! And I see many of you have it as well. I see a lot of beach out there right now. I feel very much at home.

You are going to heaven. So He says, “Keep that in mind. Keep that in the forefront of your mind.”

The final reason they do not have to be troubled is that Jesus is coming again. Look at [John 14:3](#). “I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am you may be also.” He is coming again. This is something we need to keep in front of our people, because we are living in a crazy world.

I was just reading in the paper on the way up here about the potential for nuclear war between Pakistan and India. They said if this war were to break out, it could blow the economy apart. It could cause refugees like we have never seen. It could affect the whole planet. We think, “Well, that is just those guys over there.” It will be coming to our own backyard. And then of course there are all these other problems such as the conflict in the Middle East and the threat of terrorism in our own nation. People are frightened right now. We are living in frightening times and we need to remind them that Jesus is coming back again.

Do not forget to give that message to them because the Scripture tells us in [1 John 3:3](#), “He that has this hope purifies himself, even as He is pure.” If a person properly understands the teaching of the imminent return of Christ, it will cause them to want to live a more godly life. And so Jesus is saying, “I am coming again to receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

I love the way the story ends. Jesus said, “And where I am going you know and the way you know.” Thomas responded, “We do not know the way.” I love Thomas. If I had been one of the disciples I know I would have hung out with Thomas because he was a skeptic. He was not a person who was filled with unbelief. There is a difference between skepticism and unbelief. A skeptic, when presented with the truth will believe. An unbeliever, when presented with the truth, will not believe. It is a choice they have made. Thomas was skeptical.

I have never been one to believe something just because someone said it was true. I have always wanted to know for myself. And Thomas wanted the same. We call him “Doubting Thomas” because after the crucifixion when the Lord appeared to the disciples, Thomas was not there. When they told him about it he said, “Well, I will believe it when I can put my hand in His side and actually touch the wounds in His hands.” The next time they met together, Thomas was there. I love the fact that the Lord just appears and says, “Thomas, go ahead. Put your hand in My side.” That reminds us that He is the unseen listener to every conversation. “I was eavesdropping on what you said, Thomas. Go for it. Here I am.” And in defense of Thomas, he said, “My Lord and My God” ([John 20:28](#)). He did not need further proof. That was all he wanted. He wanted to know for himself. He just wanted to be convinced.

Jesus is talking to the disciples. He says, “I am going to prepare a place for you and I will come again and receive you unto Myself. Where I go you know and the way you know.” And I think all the disciples were thinking, “Man, that is so deep.” I do not think they had a clue.

It is sort of like when you are in class and the teacher does some complex problem on the blackboard, turns back to the class and says, “Now, does everyone understand?” Everyone nods, “Yeah, yeah” because you do not want to be the one person that says, “Excuse me. I do not understand it.”

Jesus says, “Where I am going you know and the way you know.” The disciples were probably nodding, “Oh yes, yes.” Thomas was probably in the back. “I have a question, Lord.” “Yes,

Thomas?” “We do not know where You are going. We do not know the way. What are you talking about?” Jesus does not reprove him. He does not correct him. He just says, “I am the way, the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by Me” ([John 14:6](#)). It was as if to say, “That is a good question, Thomas and here is a good answer.”

We are living in a time when it is becoming more and more unpopular to say, “Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father.” It is not politically correct to stand up and have to say, “Folks, the other religions of this world are false. These other belief systems are not true. Only Christ is true.” I am amazed that even in the evangelical world you see liberalism seeping in. Even people who call themselves evangelicals are actually beginning to fudge on this a little bit. Obviously this is a non-negotiable issue. We have to hold this one hard. We need to proclaim it to people and they need to understand this is true. It is not just that they have chosen to be a Christian and that is the way they are following. Other people have their own way. No, we need to help people understand. It is through Christ; this is the only way to know God. They need to share this with other people.

Maybe you have a troubled heart today. Maybe your world has been thrown into confusion. Maybe a bombshell has recently come your way. What do you need to do?

Number one, you need to believe in God. Just remember that God knows what He is doing. He is the author and finisher of your faith. He is going to complete what He has begun in your life as an individual and in your ministry. As God says in [Jeremiah 29:11](#),

I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord,
thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope
[or literally, an expected end].

There is an expected end. There is a conclusion. He is going to bring it all together. It may not be until much later in life. For Joseph it certainly was not until much later when all of it came together. And maybe for some of us it will not be until we get to the other side, where all of our questions will be answered.

Number one, believe in God. Number two, remember you are going to heaven. Number three, remember Jesus is coming back again.

Let’s pray.

Lord, we thank You for Your Word. Help us to not be troubled today. Help us to not be agitated, stressed, and thrown into confusion. Help us to believe what You have said, take it to heart, and then to live by it. Thank You for the position of responsibility You have given to us. We know that the enemy has set his sights on us. He would love to sift us as wheat. But Lord, we thank You that You are interceding for us and You will not give us more than we can handle. At the same time, Lord, help us, like Joseph, to take practical steps to keep as much distance from anything that could pull us down as possible. Help us remember the importance of Your glory and Your name. Lord, we would never want to do anything to bring dishonor to it. It is a great privilege You have given to us to be in a position of leadership. As it has been said, “It takes a steady hand to hold

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a full cup.” So Lord, give us a steady hand and give us a heart that is turned toward You. Keep us strong until that day when You call us into Your presence. We thank You now, in Jesus’ name. Amen.