

Words for the Worried

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“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. ... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:1, 27).

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

That wonderful discourse recorded for us in John 14-16 begins and ends with a reference to trouble. In between, there come many references to some of the most profound truths that can occupy the human mind. Yet Christ ordained that His final utterance to His disciples ere He suffered should begin and end on the same note of comfort. This is only another instance of the perfection of all His ways. And His ways are a revelation of Himself. He knew how careworn those disciples were at that moment, He had perceived the sorrow that had captured their hearts and filled them with dread, and in His perfect love to them, and consideration, He applies the balm that would heal their wounds.

As we have suggested, this ministry of consolation reveals Himself. He reminds them of His own triumph and of the double necessity for His going away: (1) to prepare a place for them in the Father’s house, and (2) that the other Comforter might come. And the lesson we learn is just this: All comfort in affliction—in sorrow and depression and heart sickness—and all victory over it come to us through the knowledge of Him. What tragedies are constantly happening in the world for want of this knowledge! There are men and women who have nowhere to turn in their desperate need, and when the world and its pleasures fail them, they give way to despair, plunge deeper into sin, or, it may be, with their own hands, put an end to their existence.

Christ says to His own, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, *believe also in Me.*” And again, “*Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*”

Faith in Him is the great remedy. He never fails.

*“Our comfort midst all grief and thrall,
Our life in death, our all in all.”*

And, next, what cheer those words afford, “*I have overcome.*” He is greater than the world. The world had nothing to give Him. All its most tempting offers and its choicest and most coveted prizes are nothing. He turns His eyes to heaven, where He is about to receive everything from the hands of the Father, and says, “Glorify Thy Son.” It is because of this He can satisfy our poor, empty hearts. He alone is great enough to say, “*Let not your heart be troubled,*” and to fill the void left by the world; He alone can give peace.

Here is an account of one who had proved for himself the truth of these words of our Lord. A soldier, back from the front, gives us this interesting account of the grace of God. He says, “A short time before I was wounded, I was invited by the officers of the regiment to a supper given in honor of a soldier who had been through all the war and had done many brave deeds, but had received no reward for them. After the supper was over, one of the officers said to him, ‘You have been through all this war and have not told us a single incident in it. Now tell us what you consider the most wonderful thing you have seen in it.’ The soldier waited a minute,

and then he stood up and said, 'I was walking near my trench one day, when I saw a young soldier lying on the ground intently reading a book. I went up to him and said, "What book is that you are reading?" "My Bible," he answered. "Oh!" I said, "I read my Bible for years, and it never did me any good; give it up, man, give it up!" He answered, "Listen to what I am reading, 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. 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.'" He read on to the end of the chapter. "Oh!" I said, "I have read that chapter many a time, and it never did me any good; give it up, man, give it up." He looked at me and said, "If you knew what the Bible is to me, you would never ask me to give it up," and, as he spoke, the light on his face was so bright, I never saw anything like it — it fairly dazzled me. I could not look at it, so I turned and walked away.

"Soon after, a bomb fell near the place where we had been, and when the dust had cleared away I thought I would go and see if that young soldier was safe. I found his head had been completely blown off, but I saw his Bible sticking out of his breast pocket, and here it is,' he said, holding it up. 'I say the most wonderful thing I have seen during the war was the light on that young soldier's face, and, more than that, I can now say that his Saviour is my Saviour too!'"

How many there are today who need just such a word as this: "Let not your heart be troubled," and again, "Let it not be afraid." Some deep sorrow has come to them, or their hearts are fearful, or foes, and it may be friends are against them. Christ says, "In **Me** ye shall have peace." All is allowed to drive us closer to Him. Someone has said recently, "I never see a crowded assembly of men and women but I think of the privations and disappointments, the unsatisfied hungers and unalleviated sorrows which make up their lot. How much they have suffered, how much they have lost, how frequent have been their sicknesses and bereavements, how humbling have been their defeats, how searching have been their mortifications and betrayals, how full of anxiety their outlook on life! I never sit and speak with an old man who opens out the story of his long life, but I realize again how closely sealed the book of life is to a man himself. The story told is one of hope unfulfilled, work unfinished, love baffled, trial upon trial, sorrow upon sorrow, death upon death, impoverishing and shadowing life all the way through."

The keen blast is to drive us nearer. Many things which we thought we could ill spare may have been uprooted in the storm, but His love abides as warm and unchanging as ever, and He wants us to nestle more closely to Himself.

Once when Charles Garrett was preaching to a large congregation about the mysterious troubles that often come to the Christian man or woman, he was saying that we are not exempt from trouble, whom the Lord loves He chastens, and some converted men had more trouble after their conversion than before. He had known Christian men who were steeped in trouble — surrounded by it — trouble to the right, trouble to the left, trouble in front, trouble behind. Then an old man in the gallery, who had served God for seventy years, shouted, "Glory be to God, it's always open at the top."

"I love the knowledge," wrote one, "that has come through sorrows and trials and pardoned sins of a love that has never wearied towards me and is fresher than the freshest dew of youth

and mellow than the ripest tenderness of age.”

Yes, it is in the hour of some sorrow, it may be of human forsaking or of hope deferred which makes the heart sick, that that love visits us and seems to borrow sweetness from the very pangs it seeks to assuage. In such an hour these words may come: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.” In an hour of disappointment which left the heart questioning there came to one the words: “*Thy love is better than wine.*” They were dropped into the heart, as it were, from the very throne of light and distilled an infinite peace. The whole outlook, every feeling within and every aspect around, was changed instantly. Oh! if only we believed this more thoroughly and more constantly: “Thy love is *better* than wine.” Wine stands as the very symbol of earthly joy, of whatever kind, yet there is something *better*, and if the earthly joy is denied or removed there is this “something better” to fill its place, if only we will admit it. Do not stop short of such an experience. Even if your most cherished object has been removed and the light of your life seems to have gone out, if disappointment seems to dog your steps, your schemes to fail, and your labors to bring no reward, learn to bow your head and say, “*Thy love is better than wine.*”

We were told the other day of a man who had been through a lot of trouble. He waited fifteen years before he was able (for family reasons) to marry the woman he had set his affections upon. After some months of happiness together, she died in giving birth to their first child. His sister-in-law came to keep house, and one morning she was found dead in bed. One son died in the war, and another is grievously afflicted, and now he has just lost his second wife. But he wrote to someone saying how God had prepared him in such a loving, tender way for these trials, and he adds that they had been the means by which he had learned God’s *gentleness*. “Thy gentleness hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35).

Are you troubled and afraid because of failure or sin? Christ is sufficient even in days of despair. His blood can wipe out the past. He can give peace. “*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*” If only you are contrite and believing, He can do the rest. Do you feel your weakness? He says, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome.” Here is the testimony of one who found deliverance: “At a certain religious meeting those present were invited to testify what had been the source and secret of their best blessings. One after another bore witness, until an unknown woman rose up and spoke in a voice of pathetic passion: ‘You have told us what has blessed you most. I will tell you what has blessed me most, the shame and disgrace that followed my great sin. I was young and proud and careless; I loved pleasure only. I sinned, and I lost everything and everybody. But I gained a broken and contrite heart. The shame and the disgrace were what I needed, and I thank God they came.’ At the end of the day multitudes will confess, ‘It was good for me that I suffered; it was good that I was ashamed. Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word.’ Those who sit down in God’s kingdom come not only from the east and the west, but from the north and the south. His fire and hail and snow and stormy wind, not less than His sun and stars and fruitful seasons, conspire to speed the pilgrims along the road. He sends forth His angels, even the angels of agony and sorrow and remorse, who gather His elect from the four winds and compel them to come in.”

Our Lord was going away from His disciples when He uttered the words we are dwelling upon. Blank despair filled their hearts. When we consider how much He had been to them, we can

easily understand how the prospect of His absence filled them with an unutterable sense of loss. Yet it was in these circumstances He uttered the words, "Let not your heart be troubled." They were not to be *afraid* even in the presence of what seemed like utter desolation. And before His discourse closed, He went even as far as to say, "Be of good cheer." Not only was He withdrawing His presence from them, but He was leaving them in the midst of a hostile world. Yet He would be even nearer to them than before and more able to help. His own Spirit would be their Teacher, Guide and Comforter.

Are you worried because of apparently conflicting duties, or because the step you feel you ought to take threatens to involve you in a sacrifice which seems too great and too heavy to bear? Listen to the following account of one who went through this experience, and "let not your heart be troubled."

"I went one night to a nearby city to hear an address on consecration. No special message came to me from it. But as the speaker kneeled to pray, he dropped this sentence, 'O Lord, Thou knowest we can trust the Man that died for us.' And that was my message. I rose and walked down the street to take the train. As I walked I pondered deeply all that consecration might mean to my life, and — *I was afraid*. And then, above the noise and clatter of the street traffic, came to me the message, 'You can trust the Man that died for you.' I got into the train to ride homeward. As I rode I thought of the changes, the sacrifices and the disappointments which consecration might mean to me, and — I was afraid. And then again, above the roar of the train and the hubbub of voices came this message, 'You can trust the Man that died for you.' I reached home and sought my room. There upon my knees I saw my past life. I had been a Christian and a Sunday school superintendent for years, but had never definitely yielded my life to God. Yet as I thought of the darling plans which might be baffled, of the cherished hopes to be surrendered, and the chosen profession which I might be called upon to abandon — *I was afraid*. And then, for the last time, with a rush of convicting power, came again to my innermost heart that searching message: 'My child, my child, *you can trust the Man that died for you. If you cannot trust Him, whom can you trust?*' And that settled it for me."

There may be someone reading these lines whose earthly prospects are blighted through ill health. Few trials can be more severe or more testing. But Christ's words apply equally in these conditions, as the following incident will show. It is a true story of a fair but delicate girl, who had become engaged to be married:

"At first she seemed to be in good health, but anxious symptoms appeared, and gradually it became evident that there was no real recovery for her. At the first approach of danger, she naturally recoiled from the thought of death and steadfastly determined that she would recover. She refused to consent to any delay being made in the preparations for her wedding, while she strove to impress upon those around her her own rose-colored hopes of recovery. So her wedding dress was altered to suit her wasting form, and her devoted family allowed no note of alarm to reach her ears. But long before this time, she had admitted me into the deep confidence of her heart, and I remembered our mutual agreement: 'Whichever of us is to be the one to pass away first shall be told by the other, when she knows that the time is drawing near.' At last it became necessary to carry out this compact. It was hard to meet her smiling welcome, while being the bearer of the heavy tidings. Little was said, but she soon understood

the sad purport of a few words, and she turned away her sweet face as if in displeasure. A silence followed, and in the stillness both hearts were communing with their God. Then her little white hand clasped mine, and with a few gentle tears, she said, 'All is peace. My strong will is now on the side of the will of my God — and I know that God is love.' Thenceforward the love of the Saviour, whom she had before known and trusted, took the first place in her heart, even above the dearest of earthly ties, and her peace was deep as a river. A little while later, passing by death as one unnoticed, seeing only the face of Him who is the resurrection and the life, she calmly fell asleep, to awake in His likeness."

"Let not your heart be troubled." Christ speaks such words as no one else can utter them. They apply to all who believe in Him, and they cover every circumstance. We may repeat them as good advice to those we seek to comfort and encourage, but such may turn to us and say, "You do not know all. It is impossible for anyone to know what I am feeling." But from the lips of the One who first uttered them, these words, "Let not your heart be troubled," and, "Be of good cheer," come as something more than good advice —they come with *authority* and with *full knowledge* of our utmost need. From Him such words are a command, and they are a *specific*. They are not vain words. *He is great enough to utter them*, for He who utters them is Master of all situations and all circumstances, and "all things serve His might." He who orders and controls nature and by His word stilled the stormy wind and the raging of the waves can also heal the brokenhearted and give deliverance to the captive, and He can and He does release the human spirit from its trouble and fear and inspire it with new strength and courage.

Does hope seem dead and buried? Does the outlook on life seem dreary? Have its flowers and fruits, the presence of which gave you much happiness, disappeared? Remember the words, "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

"When the ground in London was cleared of the old buildings to make the New Kingsway, it lay for a year exposed to the light and air. A strange sight drew naturalists to the ruins. In some cases the soil had not felt the touch of spring since the day when the Romans sailed up the Thames and beached upon its strand. When the sunlight poured its life upon this uncovered soil, a host of flowers sprang up. Some were unknown in England. They were plants the Romans had brought with them. Hidden away in the darkness, lying dormant under the mass of bricks and mortar, they seemed to have died. But under the new conditions, obeying the law of life, they escaped from death and blossomed into a new beauty."

So may it be with every life, however crushed and bruised by sorrow, however blighted by sin. It needs only to be laid open to the breath of God's Spirit, the sunshine of His love, and the healing atmosphere of His grace in Christ Jesus, and a new life, with new possibilities and new beauties, will arise, however desolate at present the scene may appear.

*"Thus ever on through life we find
To trust, O Lord, is best;
Who serve Thee with a quiet mind
Find in Thy service rest;
Their outward troubles may not cease,
But this their joy will be:*

*'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace
Whose mind is stayed on Thee.'*

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