

Heavenly Truths for Troubled Hearts

John 14:1-14

Don Piper (not to be confused with John Piper) wrote a book in recent years that received a lot of attention called *90 Minutes in Heaven*. He writes the following:

I died on January 18, 1989. Paramedics reached the scene of the accident within minutes. They found no pulse and declared me dead. They covered me with a tarp so that onlookers wouldn't stare at me while they attended to the injuries of the others. I was completely unaware of the paramedics or anyone else around me. Immediately after I died, I went straight to heaven. While I was in heaven, a Baptist preacher came on the accident scene. Even though he knew I was dead, he rushed to my lifeless body and prayed for me. Despite the scoffing of the EMTs, he refused to stop praying. At least 90 minutes after the EMTs pronounced me dead, God answered that man's prayers. I returned to earth. This is my story. (Piper, *90 Minutes*, 13)

- The following pages describe his tragic car accident and long, painful recovery.
- However the focus of the book is about his visit to heaven for the ninety minutes between when he was pronounced dead and when he, in his words, "returned to earth." [Several books like this have been published in recent years, it's something of a trend, and it's dangerous].
- Piper makes this problematic statement: **"I've changed the way I do funerals. Now I can speak authoritatively about heaven from first-hand knowledge"** (ibid., 129).
- Now, I don't want to do a book review this morning, nor do I even want to raise the question about this visit to heaven. I bring the story up because many people **derive their view of heaven from the wrong source.**
- **Our hope for heaven is not in anyone's supposed experience of it.**
 - **We don't need to look beyond Jesus Christ to know that heaven is for real.**
- **Our hope for heaven comes from the authority of God's Word.**
- **We can speak authoritatively about heaven because of the testimony of Scripture.**
- **In John's gospel, we find the only one who can truly give us real first hand knowledge of heaven: Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven.**
- Over and over in John's gospel, Jesus has been saying, **"I came down from heaven."** (eg, Jn 6:38).

Soon after the teaching in John 14, he would return to heaven, but not before telling us how to get there, what we can anticipate, and how to live in the meantime.

In this treasured passage, Jesus shares some eternally important truths about heaven with his troubled disciples.

We need this text because **we need rest for our troubled souls.**

We don't need some trite clichés to latch on to when our soul is in turmoil; we need to hear the very words of the Son of God about ultimate realities.

A couple of big picture notes in John 14:1-14

- The trouble he's addressing is the disciples' despair over his immanent death and departure.
- After the initial exhortation in verse 1 to trust him he provides glorious encouragements to them, telling them why it is better that he go away.
- Notice the phrases "I am going" or "I go" – **v. 2; v. 3; v. 4; v. 12**
- They (and we) would not have certain blessings unless departed (die, rise, ascend).

The word **"Father"** appears 13 times in the first **14 verses**.

It appears **22 times** in the whole chapter. I think this is the most of anywhere in Scripture.

This is what we see:

- Jesus has promised us a place in our Father's house.
- Jesus provided the way to know the Father.
- Jesus gave us power for life in ministry (by going to the Father).

The discourse advances as Jesus responds to

- Peter, "Where are you going?" (13:36-14:4)
- Thomas, "We do not know where you are going?" (14:5-7)
- Philip, "Lord Show us the Father" (14:8-11).
- Verses 12-14 serve as a transition into the next section as Jesus will talk about work of the Spirit.

Jesus likely taught for a long time during supper, and so we have summaries of his words. (Burge)

The betrayer has left (13:31), and now Jesus turns to the Eleven, providing important instruction.

Stop Being Troubled; Trust Christ (14:1)

Even though it is just hours before his death, Jesus is comforting the disciples.

- Previously, Jesus' soul was troubled (**12:27; 13:21**), but now he directs his attention to them.
- They're not comforting him; he's comforting them.
- This tells us something special about our Lord.
- All the way to the cross, he has others on his mind.

The whole Farwell discourse can give you peace in the midst of turmoil.

Notice 16:33: “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

“Let not your heart be troubled”

- 14:27—it is repeated.
- This present imperative means, “Stop being troubled.”
- “Do not be anxious about anything” (Matt 6, Phil 4)

What prompted their fear?

- Jesus was leaving them – after spending three years with them.
- But also recall the prior interaction with Peter – “you will deny me.” (13:38)
- No doubt, Jesus’ words led them to be frightened by the future. What is about to happen? What kind of trial is imminent?
- They are all very disturbed at what may await them in the future.
- They are under great emotional pressure.

How many of you think about your future and troubling circumstances it freaks you out?

Job said, “Anyone born of woman is short of days and full of trouble.” (Job 14:1)

Can you resonate with that? Life is full of trouble.

- **Social troubles:** the threat of crime, international crises, political corruption, violence and poverty in Third-World countries; fatherliness and more.
- **Disappointments.** People will disappoint you. You will disappoint people. We will disappoint ourselves.
- **Circumstances** – loss of loved ones, sickness, and uncertainty about the future.
- **Seasons of great trouble:** “The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distress” (Ps 25:17).
- **Spiritual turmoil** – when you have rebelled against God and you feel as though his presence has been withdrawn (Ps 51); or for whatever reason, perhaps worldliness, has caused you to lose your first love. Many call this kind of spiritual trouble as *the dark night of the soul*.
- **Trouble when you obey God!** Just read Acts! Paul said that it is “through many tribulations” that we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22).

What should you do?. Stop being troubled and “Believe in God, believe also in me.”

- Don’t hold on to it, but give it to Jesus.
- Believe in him. Faith in any meaningful sense is impossible apart from faith in Jesus.
- Believing in the Father and believing in him is the only path to peace.
- It is one thing for the disciples to believe in the God who acted in the past, but it is another to believe in the One in their midst.
- But if Jesus speaks the words of God and does the works of God, he is to be trusted as God.

Belief today is popular – but it is faith with no specific focus. It can be in anything, including belief itself – “believe in belief”

“**Believe in something even if it costs you everything**” (Nike Commercial)

Real faith **must have adequate grounding.**

- It must be a focused faith – focused on Jesus.
- Believe in “**Me**” Jesus says.

What is Jesus Christ’s remedy for a troubled heart? It is Jesus Christ himself!

- The rest of the verses go on to tell us why we should trust Jesus.

3 Encouraging Words to Troubled Disciples

#1: The Promise of Heaven (14:2-3)

The first reason Jesus gives to trust in him is because **his departure is purposeful. He is going to prepare a place in heaven for his disciples.**

“**my Father’s house**” refers to **heaven**. It’s not a **hotel**, but a house.

- It is a permanent dwelling for God’s **children**.

“**Many rooms**” not “**many mansions**” (as older translations say).

- The picture is not of some extravagant residence; **nothing here is said of the nature of this heavenly abode**, contrary to songs, “I’ve got a mansion just over the hilltop.”
 - These kinds of songs are often devoid of Jesus and smack of the prosperity gospel; where the goal is to get more stuff.
 - The message of the gospel is not “If faith in Jesus may not give you a mansion now, **you can get one in the future**”
 - Jesus isn’t promising us a house like those on **Yo MTV Cribs**.
- The idea is “**many dwelling places.**”
- **In ancient Israel, rooms were literally built on to existing homes in order for extended family to have a dwelling place.**
- The focus is not on the size and look of a facility, but with the dwelling place provided.
- It has to do with **permanent residences, places of permanent residences.**

Right now we live in a **temporary residence, no matter how cozy your home is.**

- Our **permanent home**, our home in heaven is our permanent residence.

That’s important as you discern the will of God for your life – there really is not home here on earth, so you are free to be mobile for the sake of mission.

- “**Many**” – there is room for all the redeemed!

Having made the point about not imagining a home like on “Yo MTV Cribs” we do need to remember that Heaven itself **will be a place of dazzling beauty.**

- **It's just not mentioned here; it's the not the emphasis.**
- We get glimpses of the glory to come in Revelation (see **Rev 21:9-27**)
- **It will be more glorious than any earthly abode imaginable, for Christ himself will be there, there will be no sin present, and the beauty itself will make us stand in awe.**

Our home in heaven is not a pie-in-the sky wish dream, or escapism.

- **It's a central aspect of our faith. (cf. **Phil 3:20-21**).**
- **It gives us hope, peace, and purpose in life.**
- It is important to know your **destination**, especially in times of trouble.
- Knowing that we will dwell with Christ brings us **peace** and it brings **purpose**.

C.S. Lewis

“A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth “thrown in:” aim at earth and you will get neither” (Mere Christianity, p.134).

Richard Baxter, an old Puritan Pastor, is a hero of the faith.

- **He was a man that actually lived with unrelenting sufferings.**
- **Someone once asked Baxter, “Given all your sufferings, how have you managed to be so productive and faithful all these years (he lived to 76)?”**
- **He responded, “I think about heaven for thirty minutes every day.”** (in Whitney, “Think Much About Heaven”)

“Prepare a place for you”

So heaven is even now a place – “though the location is now unknown to us and [its] existence is now unable to be perceived by our senses. It is this place of God’s dwelling that will be somehow made new at the time of the final judgment and will be joined to a renewed earth.” (Grudem)

How will he **prepare** it? I don’t think we should imagine hammering golden 2X4’s right now, leading this massive task force.

- He would prepare it by the events of Easter.
- **Every barrier between us and heaven was removed through his passion.**
- **It is through his departure, via the cross and resurrection and ascension that Jesus would prepare this place for us.**
- He prepared a place in heaven for us at great cost to himself.
- **No cross, no heaven.** It’s simple.

V. 3: Jesus now speaks of the Second Coming.

Jesus is the **bridegroom** (3:29; Song of Songs 8:2a), who has gone to prepare the place for his bride, and will come back to take his bride **unto himself**.

- Other interpretations see this as Jesus appearing after the resurrection; or in the coming of the Holy Spirit, but it seems plain that Jesus is talking about his **return**.
- Having said this, many read way to much into verse 3, with sensational end times **scenarios**.
- The point is simple and glorious: **the saints will be with their Lord**.
- This is the central hope and glory of heaven: **to be with Christ**.

Spurgeon: “There will be little else we shall want of heaven besides Jesus Christ. He will be our bread, our food, our beauty, and our glorious dress. The atmosphere of heaven will be Christ; everything in heaven will be Christ-like, yes, Christ is the heaven of his people.”

Popular Views **don't include Jesus!**

- “Is this heaven?” “No it's Iowa” (Field of Dreams)
- “If heaven ain't a lot like Dixie... (Hank)
- Redneck Heaven pictures Conway Twitty, Hank, Elvis, More (Billy Ray)
- Heaven will be a place of “dirty roads for miles ... dogwood trees and honeybees”
- Bikini clad women on a commercial selling ice cream with the tag line, “positively sinful.”

But it's in Christian music as well.

I used to enjoy the band Audio Adrenaline, but they used to have a song called “Big House” (1993) and it came to mind as Jesus told us what we are to actually look forward to.

Some of you old youth campers may remember this:

I don't know where you lay your head
or where you call your home
I don't know where you eat your meals
or where you talk on the phone
I don't know if you got a cook
a butler or a maid
I don't know if you got a yard
with a hammock in the shade

I don't know if you got some shelter
say a place to hide
I don't know if you live with friends
in whom you can confide
I don't know if you got a family
say a mom or dad
I don't know if you feel love at all
but I bet you wish you had

[PRE-CHORUS]
Come and go with me
to my Fathers house
Come and go with me
to my Fathers house

[CHORUS]

It's a big big house
with lots and lots a room
A big big table
with lots and lots of food
A big big yard
where we can play football
A big big house
Its my Fathers house

Well, the Lord does make great promises to the broken; and I do want people to go with me to heaven; but there's a danger of **imagining a heaven without heaven's Lord.**

What are we to look forward to in regard to heaven?

V. 3: "I will take you to myself."

- **Count the references to Jesus "I," "myself,"**
- **We will be with him! Which is "better by far" (Phil 1:21-23)**

#2: The Path to Heaven (14:4-11)

V. 4: The subject shifts to the "way" to heaven (v. 4, 5, 6).

- **It is precisely that the disciples know Jesus that they know the way to heaven.**
- "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people" (Lewis Chafer).
- How can we be prepared people – by knowing Jesus....
- Not by being moral, doing a few rituals, etc.

5: Thomas doesn't follow the argument thus far, so he asks the question, "How can we know the way?" (A minor miracle: a man asking for directions). He's looking for a, a GPS.

6: Jesus answers Thomas: He is the way to heaven.

He makes the claim in verse 6, and then grounds the claim in who He is in v. 7-11.

These verses, as Morris notes, are spoken on the eve of the crucifixion:

- "I am the way" said the one who would hang on a cross.
- "I am the truth" said the one who endure the insults and lies of enemies.
- "I am the life" said the one whose body would be laid in the grave.

It's hard to find a better verse to summarize the theology of John's gospel, than this verse. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him.

The emphasis is on "the way" since that's the question (v. 4, 5, 6).

Early followers were initially called "followers of the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22)

Access to the Father's presence in heaven only comes through Christ.

- This proclamation in John 14:6 prepares the way for the writer of Hebrews to declare, “We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body” (Heb. 10:19–20).

There’s only one way home – in Jesus. (Ps 16:11)

Few verses are as offensive in the NT than this one in our pluralistic age.

But Jesus declares that he is the only way to God. He is the only way to heaven.

People ask, “**Do you believe Jesus is the only way?**” **Well, “Jesus did.”**

- **This is not my claim, but Jesus’ claim!**

- Last week a little girl looked to me and said, “**Hey, you are the reporter?**”

- That’s a great observation. I hope I am.

- I’m not to invent news, but report it and remind you of it.

- **This is the consistent message of the NT – all are invited, but there’s only one entrance, the narrow way, the one door (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5).**

- **Only God can lead us to God.**

R.C. Sproul tells the following story of the kind of opposition you will face for embracing this claim:

I once took a college class that was taught by a woman who was openly hostile to the Christian faith. She never missed an opportunity to attack Christianity in her classroom, so I tried to melt into the woodwork to escape the arrows of her wrath. One day, however, she called on me in front of the class. She said, "Mr. Sproul, do you believe that Jesus is the only way to God?" I knew how she felt about any exclusive claims to Jesus, so I knew I was caught between a rock and a hard place. If I said what I believed, I would experience an avalanche of wrath from the instructor. But if I didn't say what I believed, I would be guilty of nothing less than treason to the King of kings. I mumbled an answer, but she said, "What was that?" So I said: "Yes, ma'am. I do believe that Jesus is the only way to God." She went into a paroxysm of rage that spilled out on me. She said, "That is the most narrow-minded, arrogant, bigoted thing I've ever heard a student say." The rest of the class glared at me as she heaped her scorn on me.

After the class, as I was walking out the door, she stopped me and said: "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be so hard on you. But I just can't understand how anybody could be that narrow-minded." I said to her: "Well, I hope you can understand my problem. I have been persuaded that Christ is the Son of God. I am a Christian. There is nothing more foundational to Christianity than the confession that Jesus is the Son of God. Now if I believed that Jesus was the only way to God because He happened to be *my* way, and the unspoken premise of my logic was that anything that R. C. Sproul believes must, by logical necessity, be the only true way to think, then I would agree with your assessment that that would be unspeakably arrogant, bigoted, and narrow-minded. But I hope you understand why I believe Jesus is the only way. **It is because Jesus said that He was the only way, and if I deny that, I deny Him.**"

This is the claim of Jesus Christ, not our claim – the Christ who claimed to be the bread of life, the resurrection and the life, the good shepherd and more.

Do not be embarrassed by his words, be thankful that you have them!

Trying to find a road to heaven apart from the Lord of heaven is an exercise in **futility**, and will only lead to **despair**.

- It is also a massive **insult** to Jesus to say, “Thanks, but I am sure there are other ways too.”

Trust in Christ’s words.

- He is the way, having come from God and returning back to God.
- He is the truth; everything he says is reliable.
- He is the life; the one who defeated death is worthy of trust.

The **“Truth”** – he reveals the truth of God.

- He says what God says and does God’s will perfectly.
- Following Jesus following the truth.
- Paul says, “The truth is in Jesus” (Eph 4).

The **“Life”** – those who come to Christ have eternal life – a life that begins now and continues throughout eternity.

- We have resurrection life in Christ Jesus (Jn 11:25)

What should stun us is not that there is only one way to God, but that there even is a way! Jesus has provided it.

Jesus provides reconciliation (for he is the way)

Jesus provides illumination (for he is the truth)

Jesus provides regeneration (for he is the life)

7: His exclusive claim is rooted in his unique identity and his unique relationship with the Father.

- To really know him is to know the Father (Morris).
- **Why is he the only way? He is the only divine Son of God.**
- Their understanding will be enhanced, “**from now on**” as he departs and the Spirit is given....

v. 8: Reflecting on Jesus’ last phrase, Philip says, “**Show us the Father, that will be enough.**” Come Philip!

- It’s like he’s saying, “We’ve seen you turn water into wine; walk on water, feed thousands with a sack lunch, raise the dead, but we need one more thing: peel back the veil and let us see the face of God. Do this and we will be satisfied!” (Sproul).

- Philip doesn't understand that in seeing Jesus, He is seeing God. Moses saw a glimpse, but Philip is looking at God incarnate.

9: Jesus says this with absolute clarity here. "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father."

- **Jesus is more than just a religious guide.**
- **He is the divine Son of God.**

10-11: Jesus justifies his claim by drawing attention to his **words** and his **works**. [read]

- Jesus did the work of the Father, and spoke His Words.

#3: Power from Heaven (14:12-14)

Now there is the question of the intervening time.

- Jesus is going away.
- Jesus will come back.
- We will dwell with him.
- **But what now?**

Because Jesus would **go to the Father**, the Spirit would be poured out, giving his followers power for life and ministry.

Prior to his ascension he said: ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Lk 24:49)

Acts 1:6-11

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The book of Acts then shows us how the disciples experienced the Spirit's power and lived on mission.

John 14 is introducing us to this idea of the Holy Spirit empowering all believers for life and ministry

A. Power for Greater Works (v. 12)

"Whoever believes" – so this is a blessing not reserved for the disciples. It's for all believers.

“Because I go to the Father” – it will be when the Spirit is poured out

“Will do the works that I do” – Recall Acts 1:1-5 – all that Jesus began to do and teach. Jesus continues his work through his church by the Spirit.

“Greater Works” – I don’t take as greater miracles than Jesus – raising the dead, walking on water, etc. But greater in **scope**.

They would do miracles, but I think the focus based on the book of Acts is the global impact of their ministry in the new covenant age.

Jesus’ ministry was confined to small part of the globe.

- His number of followers in Jerusalem only included 120!
- But through the disciples, by the power of the Spirit, the gospel will go from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).
- **On the day of Pentecost there were more believers than during the three years of Jesus’ ministry!**
- Acts tells this story of the greater works, of the worldwide impact of the church by the power of the Spirit.
- **We of these summaries: Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 9:35; 9:42; 11:21; 11:24; 12:24**

Apart from the Spirit, we are powerless to do what God has called us.
But we have power to do ministry!

Remember in **Numbers 11** Moses was overwhelmed because the work was too great for one man. God told him to get 70 elders and he would put the same spirit on them that Moses had.

In the new covenant, all believers are empowered for ministry (Acts 2).

B. Seek him in prayer (14:13-14)

These verses remind us of the **importance of prayer**.

Carson, “The disciples fruitful conduct [v. 12] is the product of their prayers offered in Jesus’ name.”

Whatever the disciples ask in **Jesus’ name** he will do.

- This doesn’t mean that **his name** is some *magical incantation to cite*.
- It means **prayer must be done in accordance with his will and his character.**
 - **What is Jesus concerned about?**
 - **Salvation, holiness, love, healing, etc.**

It also presupposes that you **have a relationship with the Father through the Son** (14:6). We come in Jesus' name, on the basis of what he has done for us. He has given us access to the Father.

“that the Father may be glorified in the Son”

- **It is prayer that springs from faith in Jesus, and prayer that is offered for the glory of God.**

We should also note here the reference of Jesus himself answering prayer.

- Twice, **“I will do it.”**
- **Believe in in Christ's ability!**

Put it all together:

- Prayer requires a relationship with God through Jesus.
- Prayer should be offered in alignment with Christ's will and character.
- Prayer should be directed to the glory of God.
- Prayer should flow from a believing heart.

Do you have a troubled heart?

Here are some wonderful truths to ponder:

1. We have a place in the Father's house.
2. Jesus has shown us the way – it is in Him.
3. Because he returned to the Father, he has sent the Holy Spirit to believers; giving us power right now for life and ministry.