

The Heart of Christ – the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

The Comforting Savior In the provision of Christ John 14:15-26

“15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me. 25 These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

Does anyone here like receiving gifts? I know...a silly question. Of course you do. We all love getting gifts. And if I were to ask you to share with me those gifts that were the most meaningful and most precious to you, I am sure that several items might come to mind...a certain piece of jewelry; maybe some antique book or item of furniture; whatever it might be...I suspect that you might look upon that gift with both fondness and appreciation.

When it comes to spiritual things, particularly in the circles of theology in which we find ourselves, we might often, and appropriately dwell upon the great gift of salvation as we recognize continually that it is by grace [the undeserved favor of God] by which we are saved, not by works or our merits or our worth...salvation, so says the Word of God, is a gift from God. And while I know that many of you do contemplate other gifts beyond salvation in Jesus Christ, it is interesting to see in our text this morning the Lord Jesus providing not only those eleven disciples present with Him, but also all who would be His disciples some precious promises, or, we might call them, departing gifts...that as Jesus prepares to leave this world...He wants His disciples to receive the gift of knowing certain truths and realities that belong to those who believe.

Before expounding on these realities that Jesus promises to give to them, He prefaces these realities with a test of sorts by which He means for His disciples, that is for anyone who professes to be a follower of Christ, to evaluate the certainty of their relationship with Him. The test is “obedience”. In verse 15 we read, **“If you love Me [this then is how you know you do], you will keep My commandments.”** Of this statement John Macarthur wrote, *“Obedience is a hallmark of genuine saving faith and love for God. Those who are truly saved, by grace alone, will invariably respond with a life of submission and service.”* I would have you note that it is not the response of submission and service that saves a person, but rather that the acts of submission and service are the results of having been saved and demonstrate your love for God. This test of obedience is simple and yet Jesus felt it important enough to repeat. Look at verses...

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14:21 – “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me...”

14:23 – “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word...”

14:24 – “He who does not love Me does not keep my words...”

The heart of Jesus is revealed here in that He stresses the importance of being right with God with obedience, simply doing or living by His Word. This was not the first time Jesus spoke on this matter. In Luke 6:46, Jesus asks a pointed question we must all answer saying, **“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”** Peter would say that the elect were chosen by God **“to obey Jesus Christ...”(1 Peter 1:2)** And the Apostle John, who recorded these words of Jesus in John 14 would write in 1 John 2:3-6,

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

If you are here this morning and you profess to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the simple question is this, “Do you obey Jesus?” “Do you do the things He has communicated to you through His Word?” This is how we know we truly love Jesus...when we do what He has commanded.

But the call to obey Jesus is not made in a vacuum; it is not simply something we are called to do for no reason. Our obedience to Jesus is truly to be an expression of gratitude, the realization that Jesus has done not just something, but somethings for us that ought to cause the genuinely grateful to love Jesus and serve Jesus all the more. While it is true that Jesus is a mighty Sovereign and Lord, that at one level then causes me to tremble; He is equally my brother, my friend, the lover of my soul who pours out upon me not just the bush that is salvation, but also the beautiful flowers of salvation that bloom repeatedly in the believers life. I know that I often say to you that if you have nothing else for which to be thankful, then thank the Lord that He has saved you from the penalties of your sins and the torments of hell, given you the certainty of salvation. But woe to us...for not striving to smell the sweet fragrance of the flowers of salvation, those mercies, that the prophet Jeremiah said, are new every morning. We rob ourselves of such joy when we fail to consider that salvation is not only something out there in the future, but that salvation has real meaning and tangible blessings for the present.

Our text this morning presents to us some of these flowers of salvation...the great provision of Jesus to not only deliver His people from the curse of sin, but to also give them the precious gifts of the presence of God in their lives on a daily basis. Remember again that as Jesus speaks these words, the disciples are fearful of the future, trembling at the thought of what will happen when Jesus leaves them; concerned that the activity of Jesus was concluded.

To these troubled hearts, Jesus reminds them first of their love for Him as expressed by their obedience to Him and then He shows them the extent of His love by promising four provisions by which they will not only find comfort, but also the empowering, the ability to carry on the work that Jesus began of showing the world the love of the Father in sending the Son to be

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the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. These four provisions are the promise of the presence of the Spirit of God; of the presence of the Son; of the presence of the Father and of the presence of the truth. These are the gifts Jesus promises to provide all His followers as He makes His way back to the Father via the cross. These are truly the most profound of gifts and while I wish on one hand we could look at these all in one sitting, there are too many important truths to glean from each of them. This morning then I would draw your attention to verses 16-17 as we look at the first of these promised provisions, the promise of the provision and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His people.

I. The provision of the presence of the Spirit (14:16-17)

16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

The first great gift the Lord Jesus promises to provide His followers is this gift of the Holy Spirit. Let us read the text again. It is interesting that Jesus first reminds them of His work as their great high priest, saying that He **“will ask the Father...”** This is one of the ministries of Jesus to His people today; He intercedes on our behalf. Jesus is emphatic...wanting His disciples to know this is what He will do for the text could literally read, “No less than I will ask the Father...” Who else would we have pray for us at this level? A verse I hope that you never grow weary of hearing is Hebrews 7:25 which says,

Therefore He [Jesus] is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

How much does Jesus love His own...enough to pray for them continually. And one of the first prayers of our Lord Jesus when in heaven is to provide His people with a most remarkable gift. Jesus says that He will send **“another Helper”** – whom He identifies for us in verse 17 as **“the Spirit of truth”**. This is the Holy Spirit of God. And what Jesus says about the Holy Spirit is profound and worthy of our consideration. For a part of the good news is not only salvation from sins, but also the provision of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, to dwell in us.

Therefore, a right understanding of the descriptions, pictures and truths concerning the Spirit here are paramount to the believer’s joy, comfort and ability to live for God. For the rest of our time this morning, let us use these words of Jesus to paint a picture for us of the Spirit’s relationship to the believer, the believer who shows the reality of his relationship to Jesus by virtue of obedience. We see here in verses 16-17 a five-fold picture beginning with...

1. The Affinity of the Spirit (14:16a)

To begin with we see the affinity of the Spirit in the words of Jesus. By affinity I mean to say, what is the Spirit like? Jesus refers to the One given by the Father as a **“Helper.”** The word for “Helper” is perhaps a familiar Greek word to some of you...*parakletos*. This word literally means “to come along side of (para – like “parachurch”) - to help or to aid”; but the meaning is so much broader than any one word in English conveys. That is why we have so many translations of this word. Here in the NASB it is “Helper” in other translations it is “Comforter” or “Counselor” and in 1 John 2:1 this same word is used to describe the work of Jesus as the “Advocate,” or the defense attorney, representing the believer before God.

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So then, what is the Spirit like – at least according to Jesus? The Spirit is like a counselor, an exhorter, an intercessor, an encourager; a source of comfort and aid.

2. The **Attributes** of the Spirit – who is the Spirit? (14:16a)

This is the affinity of the Spirit, but secondly, what of the attributes of the Spirit. When we hear words like counselor, intercessor, comforter and the like, are we not reminded of the very person and work of Jesus Christ Himself. Is not Jesus our “**wonderful counselor**”; is He not the one who exhorts and intercedes for us? This is why the second truth about what Jesus says regarding this Helper is important. Jesus says that He would send “**another**” helper. This word “another” really tells us something about the attributes or character of the Spirit. This word “another” actually clues us in on exactly who is the Spirit.

Now, in the English language, we only have one word for “another”. If I have two pens in my hand that are just alike, same brand, same size, same color ink, I would say that these two pens are just like one another. But if I had two different pens in my hand, completely unlike, different sizes and different color ink, I would say these two pens are not like one another. In the Greek however, I can communicate whether something is the same as something else or different than something else by which word I use. And here Jesus says that He will send another Helper of the same kind, *allos* is the Greek word. He didn’t say that He was going to send a different kind of Helper, but the same kind of Helper. The same as what you ask? Contextually it means that Jesus intends to send another person, just like Himself, another Helper, Comforter, Exhorter who would more than adequately fill His place as their Guide and Teacher. Jesus is the original Helper and now another Helper with the same credentials as Jesus, the same credentials as God would empower them to know and serve God.

If you notice carefully here, Jesus actually presents us with a picture of the Trinity...the Biblical truth of there being One God who manifests Himself continually in three persons, Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus, the Son of God, would request of God the Father to send the God the Holy Spirit, to take His own place in the believer’s life as the encourager, guide and strength. We who are so used to the idea of the Trinity must not forget that for the disciples and the first Jewish believers, the idea of there being not simply just one God, but that this one God must only be able to reveal Himself as a single entity would have made it hard for them to understand that Jesus was also God and yet even as we noted over the past couple of weeks, this is what Jesus was telling His disciples. And now Jesus adds to this the truth that the Spirit of God was not simply some kind of influence from God, but that just as Jesus is God, so the Holy Spirit would be another just like Jesus, one who is God. But this would be the repeated teaching of the New Testament. Note for example the close of 2 Corinthians 13:14 which says,

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

All the things then that revealed Jesus as God, were to be understood as residing in the Holy Spirit as well. Perhaps the greatest truth being communicated here and it so important for us to note is what this tells about the Holy Spirit as a person. Contrary to the teachings of the cults, the Holy Spirit is not simply a power or impersonal force of God. Jesus says that the Holy Spirit is like Him, a Person and as a Person the Holy Spirit possesses...

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Intellect...He knows the thoughts of God (1 Corinthians 2:11)

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

Emotion...He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Will...He does things as He determines (1 Corinthians 12:11)

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

There are so many truths in the Scriptures that reveal the Spirit to be a Person even as Jesus is a Person. But not only are we to understand that the Spirit is like Jesus in personhood by this statement, but that the Spirit is also divine just like Jesus. He is not only referred to as the Holy Spirit, but also as the Spirit of God (Matthew 3:16) and the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7, Galatians 4:6; etc). To the Holy Spirit is ascribed the attributes and works of God from creation to salvation to sovereignty. This is what Jesus was getting after when He told His disciples that He was sending them the gift of the Holy Spirit, one who is just like Jesus and would comfort, encourage and guide them even as Jesus had done.

3. The Affection of the Spirit – with us forever

But there is more that Jesus adds at the end of verse 16. For in addition to all this, Jesus tells His followers that this Helper would ***“be with you forever”***; literally “into the ages” or “into the eternal.” Whereas Jesus would be leaving, the Holy Spirit would be given to be both with the and, as we will see at the end of verse 17, “in” the followers of Christ from the moment of His indwelling on through eternity. Remember that one of the great concerns of the disciples was the thought of the activity of Christ ending - but here Jesus says they will be granted a relationship to someone like Himself that would be forever with and in them to continue the activity of Christ into eternity. How great of a provision is this?

My wife and I have been blessed with the gift of a place to stay in Branson for a couple of days as we celebrate our 20th anniversary next month. We both are looking forward to some time away, but we also know that as wonderful as a couple of days are, they will come to an end. And sometimes, even as grateful as anyone would be for such a time, do we not find ourselves wishing for just a couple more days? The provision for our get away will come to an end. And to an extent, this was the disciples concern (not that the couple of days for my wife and I would end – but that the activity of Jesus, the manifestation of the power of God was ending). Jesus says “no”...ministry will go on and you will be guided and empowered for the task by the “Helper.” What a provision!

4. The Activity of the Spirit – revealing truth

“...the is the Spirit of truth...”

But there is more about the Holy Spirit for us to consider. Jesus calls the Him ***“the Spirit of truth”*** in verse 17. This is a title for the Spirit that Jesus would use two more times in this discourse, 15:26 and 16:13 and is only found in this discourse. Why did Jesus use this title? What this is communicating? Well, just as the disciples had learned about God, sin, righteousness and spiritual matters from Jesus, Jesus now assures His followers that the ministry

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of the Spirit is to continue to reveal spiritual truth to them. To be sure, there will be additional roles of the Holy Spirit, but in the way in which the Spirit is another like Jesus, is in this process of making the Father and His will known. Even as Jesus proclaimed the truth to unbelievers, so the Spirit, according to Jesus in John 16:13, convicts the “world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.” And even as Jesus revealed truth to His followers, so the Holy Spirit illumines the mind of the believer to understand and apply the truth of God. Let us look at 1 Corinthians 2:11-13 which says,

11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

This is the promised provision of Jesus, a Helper like Himself who would continue to reveal to us the truth of God. This is the Spirit of truth...this is a part of the activity of the Spirit in your life? The question is this...are you receiving a growing knowledge of the truth of God?

5. The Appreciation of the Spirit – known and appreciated by those who know and obey Jesus.

“...whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”

This final statement of Jesus is simply a call to appreciate the Spirit of God. Jesus says that unbelievers cannot receive the Spirit of God because they don't “see Him” or “know Him”. Obviously the Holy Spirit is not seen with physical eyes. But as we have already seen earlier from verse 8, the idea of seeing the Spirit is “to behold with the mind or to understand.” And to know the Spirit is not just to know fact about Him, but rather to know Him by experience. Have you seen the work of the Spirit regenerate your heart, transform your mind, given you a desire to love and follow Jesus Christ. The world does not behold the Spirit in this way, nor does it experience Him in such a way.

But, true believers are said to have such an experience of Him...they do “know” Him and this experience would not simply be the Spirit of God “with” believers, but notice this wonderful promise....the Holy Spirit would also be “in” believers. The early church father, Ignatius used to call himself Theophorus – Greek for “Godbearer.” He said this of himself because in his words, “I bear about with me the Holy Spirit.” And so it is for every genuine believer...he is a Godbearer. How is it said in 1 Corinthians 6:19?

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

Beloved the truth is that no one who is not subject to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a believer. You must see His power changing your heart and mind to dwell upon the thing of God. It does not matter if you understand theology, or call yourself a Calvinist. You can dress yourself up to look the part and be nothing but a white-washed sepulcher, fine on the outside but dead on

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the inside. The Holy Spirit said here to both abide, live with and be in you? Is this your experience? Is this what you see and know to be true of your life. This is the great promise and provision of Jesus Christ.

Let us note that this “indwelling” of the Spirit is a new and unique ministry that began on the day of Pentecost...the beginning of the Church in Acts 2. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God had come upon believers temporarily; to give them strength, but this abiding of the Spirit was generally for a season. This is why David would cry out in Psalm 51:11, **“And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me...”** for David understood that He had no promise of the continual presence of the Spirit. In this sense, when we sing that chorus, “Create in Me a Clean Heart” and utter this line, we are uttering an impossibility...for anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ in the present age does not belong to Christ according to Romans 8:9. The giving of the Holy Spirit by the Father as a fulfillment of the request of the Son is, according to this verse now...a permanent experience. What a blessed provision!

Do you appreciate the gift of the Holy Spirit? Do you delight to be taught the truth of God by means of His control of your heart and mind? Or do you grieve Him by chasing after your own desires? Let us remember that the Spirit was give by God at the request of the Son for our benefit.

And as we close this morning, what shall we take away from this? Remember that we began with the proof of our love of Jesus...that proof being obedience to His word? Yet, if we rightly evaluate ourselves, we must all testify that apart from some outside help and influence, we would not obey Jesus. And so, to insure that His ministry on this earth of making the Father known continues, He promises to provide this great Helper, Comforter, Advocate who is like Jesus, able to encourage and empower the followers of Christ for service. Is this your experience? If not, perhaps you have not come to love and know Jesus. May today be the day you cry out for mercy and experience the transforming power of Jesus Christ in your life. If you have experience this, may it be your prayer that you might increase and abound all the more in the experience of the Spirit of God, to the exaltation of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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