

# 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 Communing Savior**

### ***The Believer's Relationship to the Holy Spirit***

***John 15:26-27***

*26 When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, 27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

In Psalm 96:4 the inspired psalmist declared, ***"For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods."*** Consider that statement, ***"great is the Lord and greatly to be praised!"*** If this tells us anything about God, it tells us that He is supremely valuable. It tells us that the Lord alone is worthy of greatest praise. It tells us that there is no other being that is as valuable and precious as is God. Since God created all things out of nothing in the space of six days and all very good, it stands to reason that God is infinitely greater and more glorious than all that He created. And because God is the highest and grandest of all beings, it becomes all the more amazing that God has created man "in His image" making humanity valuable to God and His glory. And beloved, if God is so great and so supreme, it stands to reason that anything we regard or treat as higher or greater than God makes us fools. To allow any other person, a spouse, a family member, a friend, or a celebrity receive the bulk of your attention and affection; to allow the pursuit of money, power or fame to become the focus of your being becomes nothing short of an act of treason, a failure to fulfill your ultimate purpose for being born, that is to glorify God. Beloved, it is imperative that we come to know God, as best as we are capable, in all His fullness, in all His glory, in all His wonder. We, the church, need to recover and reclaim a high view of God; a renewed vision of Him who is wondrous and sovereign over all. We have too easily allowed the world to taint and diminish our view of God. We have too quickly lost our own childlike wonder as we consider the Person and work of God among us. We are often prone to shuffle the dirt with our feet, refusing to dig deep to extract the plentiful treasure of an increasingly high view of God. Such complacency, such a willingness to be content with the little knowledge we have not only causes our own hearts to lose the awe and wonder of God, but it also communicates how little we truly esteem our Creator and Savior to a lost and dying world. For if we lose our hunger and desire to wonder after God, why would we ever expect the world to wonder at Him.

I share all of this because it has been heavy on my heart. I have been losing my own wonder of God and I desire to repent of that and to pray all the more fervently about regaining a life changing awe and reverence for Him who so loved my soul that He sent His beloved Son to die as my substitute on the cross; so that by His death, I might have life. And as we come to our passage this morning, let me make the connection between having a high view of God and these seemingly simple statements of Jesus concerning the work and Person of the Holy Spirit. Beloved, as we begin to lose the wonder of God, as we start down that path of not regularly considering Him who is infinitely inconsiderable – one of the first Persons of the Godhead that suffers in our understanding is the Holy Spirit. I must confess to you that the mystery of the Godhead, how one God exists perfectly and eternally in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is beyond my grasp. I believe it to be true because the Word of God declares it to be so. But even with that said, I find it much easier to understand and explain the roles, relationships and responsibilities of the Father and the Son than I do of the Holy Spirit. There is something

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inherently understandable about the picture painted by the words "Father and Son" – but what of the Spirit? To be sure, the church and the world has always had its debates concerning the person and substance of God and of Jesus Christ. But it seems to me that the Holy Spirit has been and in some regards is the most mysterious Person of the Godhead. Those of us brought up in the church know and confess that He is God. We know that the Spirit is not some inanimate "force" or "energy" that flows from God but rather that the Spirit is a defined Person, a Person with a will, an intellect and a personality. If we push the question a bit further, we would include the truths that it is the Spirit who quickens the heart of the unbeliever to hear and understand the truth of the gospel. We know that it is said that the Spirit indwell believers, lives right inside of them – think of that, that right now, for those of us who have been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, have the Person of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, the very Spirit and Power of God residing in you – how incredible – how mysterious – how absolutely wondrous!

And with all this, I find it interesting, no – intriguing, that with the few hours Jesus had left with His disciples before His arrest, trial and crucifixion, that one of the repeated themes of His final discourse; one of the subjects upon which He desired His disciples to be educated with; one of the most important factors to their success in the days that would follow the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus was the Person, work and relationship of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the disciples; in the lives of those who are following Jesus Christ. In verse 16, Jesus communicates some truths already communicated about the Spirit's Person and work from John 14:16-17; 26, Jesus now returns to the topic of the Holy Spirit. And what I love about these verses is not simply what Jesus tells us about the Holy Spirit, as important as that is, but He also then likens our lives; He links the disciples' future pursuits with that of the Holy Spirit. In other words, if we would become restored in our relationship with God, that relationship having been destroyed by sin, then we must be remade in the image of Jesus Christ; we must become like Jesus, who, prior to His coming to this earth, being made flesh, was always in perfect, face to face fellowship with the Father; and to be conformed to this image, this behavior, this privilege of Christlikeness requires that we be in right relationship; that is indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who's very actions and attitudes are to become the actions and attitudes of the believer. So, if we want to be right with God, we must be right with Jesus. If we would be right with Jesus, we must be right with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who testifies and communicates the picture of Christ to us; and by the Holy Spirit we also then are to testify and communicate with our lives the picture of the person of Christ. In our text of John 15:26-27, we find this simple pattern; in verse 26 we see the character of the Person of the Holy Spirit and in verse 27 we find our call to practice the presence of the Spirit in our lives. In verse 26 we find truths that increase our view of God the Holy Spirit and in verse 27 we find this call to live in light of these truths.

## **I. The Character of the Person of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26)**

*When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me...*

Here in verse 26 are some simple yet profound truths that we need to know concerning God the Holy Spirit. I hope these truths expand and exalt your view of the Holy Spirit and then inspire you to carry out the call of verse 27. The key or overriding principle in these verses is that the Holy Spirit is a Testifier – a witness; one who bears testimony; who speaks the truth on behalf of another.

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In these verses we find the Holy Spirit testifying of Jesus Christ. But what I would have you notice is just what kind of witness the Holy Spirit is as we find in verse 26 four characteristics of the kind of witness the Holy Spirit is, characteristics that are to be a part of our continual consideration.

## **A. He is a Helpful Witness**

*When the Helper comes...*

Now then, we have already discussed a bit what is meant by this word “Helper” as we find it here in our text. Some translations use the word “Comforter”. May I remind you that the Greek word for these translations literally means “to come along side for help or aid.” It speaks of one who is summoned to the side of another. It might be to help them in time of weakness or distress; hence the term Comforter. It might be to help them in time of confusion; hence the term guide. It might be to help in times of battle, hence the term Encourager. But in all these things, the one common denominator is the willingness of the One, here the Spirit, to be of help or aid to someone of need – particularly when those someone, when of us, need it. **“When the Helper comes...”** – this tells us of the Holy Spirit’s kind and patient disposition toward us. Beloved, the Spirit of God, who, like Jesus, had always enjoyed the blissful joy of being in the presence of the Father, would leave paradise and would focus His efforts on the strengthening and encouraging of believers. We can and do often stand in wonder and amazement that Jesus would leave the glories of Heaven in order to save wretched sinners like ourselves. But ought it be equally amazing that the Spirit of God would devote His precious energies toward us who are fickle and constantly bouncing back and forth between being yielded to Him and giving in to our **“fleshly desires”**? What patience the Spirit of God exercises with us as we, who have been made into temples of the Holy Spirit, willingly desecrate that temple with our pursuits after things, our lusts for earthly pleasures and our willingness to give into pride, anger, malice and other sins. Every sin committed by the believer is done in the presence of the Holy Spirit; grieving Him and quenching Him. And yet, with full knowledge of each one of us doing such things, this patient one comes. He was promised to come and help us in our weakness and transform us into the image of Jesus Christ. Oh what wondrous love the Spirit has for us! Oh what tremendous patience toward us. Let us thank the Spirit of God for His patience toward us – that even in our sins, which He detests, He has taken up residence within us and is working to draw us nigh unto Jesus. This is the Holy Spirit – a helpful witness who exercises patience with us as He draws us close to Jesus.

## **B. He is a Divine Witness**

*...whom I will send to you from the Father...proceeds from the Father...*

The second characteristic we find concerning the person of the Holy Spirit is that He is a divine witness. Now, I know that most of you here accept the Bible’s teaching on the deity of the Holy Spirit, namely that the Holy Spirit is indeed God, the third person of the Trinity. And yet, don’t let that knowledge lull you into complacency. For two times in this verse Jesus felt it necessary to emphasize the fact that the Spirit of God is **“from the Father”**. This is no empty phrase as our Lord Jesus would not waste words. So what is Jesus telling His disciples? What is it that they needed and we need to know? You will notice in the second use of the phrase we have the word “proceeds” – a word that Jesus chose in order to convey the idea of the voluntary and personal action of the Messenger, who not only is sent by the Father, but of Himself, again as we noted previously, willingly,

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proceeds on to carry out the mighty work of God to which He is destined and only to which God can accomplish. Like Jesus, the Spirit willingly came to earth to perform the works of God in and among men. To "proceed" from the Father marks then the Deity of the Spirit...in Jesus we have God come to man in the flesh; in the Spirit we have God come to man in his flesh; within man himself to enable man to do for God by the Spirit's working in him, what he could not do on his own. Emmanuel is God with us – that is Jesus; the Holy Spirit is now God in us and so we read in 1 Corinthians 6:19 this very truth – listen and wonder –

***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?***

The Spirit is **"from the Father"** – twice repeated that we might carefully note that "from" speaks of the Spirit's position, once at the side of the Father, and suggests His rather the intimate and ineffable union between the Father and the Son. The Spirit is the Divine witness, God come to dwell in man and make him like Jesus. Oh what a wonder to ponder.

## **C. He is a Truthful Witness**

*...that is the Spirit of truth...*

The third characteristic about the Spirit presented by Jesus is that He is called here **"the Spirit of truth..."** This is an interesting statement, a wondrous statement that says in effect – the Holy Spirit encapsulates all that is true, factual, pertinent and meaningful concerning God, man and life. We are not to understand this as meaning that the Spirit of God simply knows the truth as if truth exists outside of Him, but rather that He is truth. A simplistic illustration of this is to say that I know Jase; I know the man, I know a lot of things about him, I know some of his likes and dislike, but even with all this, I am not Jase. However, I do know Ed, myself, I know the man inside (as ugly as that is), I know my likes and dislikes and all the things that make not only know Ed, but in fact make me Ed. The Spirit of God knows truth not because of His observing it, but because He is it. The Holy Spirit came to earth to continue the work of Jesus Christ, who also is truth; conveying all the revelation or truth necessary for man to be made right with God through belief in His Son. The Holy Spirit is the truthful witness, giving the perfect revelation of God, and man, and duty and salvation, all of which was manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. All truth – everything you rightly believe about God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, sin and life has come to you by means of the Spirit who is truth. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 – listen and wonder –

***10 For to us God revealed them [the truths and wonders of God] through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 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.***

Do you wonder at the Spirit of Truth who has taught you your need of Christ, the provision of salvation through Christ and of the promise of eternal life in Christ?

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## **D. He is a Faithful Witness**

*...He will testify about Me.*

Finally then, in addition to seeing the Holy Spirit as the Helpful, the Divine and the Truthful witness, we see Him finally in verse 26 as the faithful witness. Whereas the phrase "Spirit of truth" conveys the full and complete scope of the revelation of God to man, the phrase here, "He...that is the Spirit...will testify about or concerning Me" speaks not simply of content, that is the truth, but also the context, the manner in which the truth will be presented. The Holy Spirit is said here to have a specific mission, a focused purpose, one thing to which He will dedicate Himself as the one sent from Jesus and the Father. ~~He will faithfully lead people to Jesus Christ.~~ The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to faithfully, accurately, and specifically lead people into the knowledge of who Jesus Christ really is. In John 16:14, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit **"will glorify Me..."** Jesus is the name above all names; it is the name of Jesus that has been given to men by which they must be saved and the Spirit in glorious humility draws people to the knowledge of Jesus on the cross and Jesus risen from the dead rather than upon Himself. Notice that there is no hesitation or hindrance to this purpose of the Holy Spirit... "He will testify..." He will faithfully communicate the truth. Jesus does not say that the Holy Spirit might testify. He does not say, "If the people are co-operative and repentant enough He could testify. He does not say if the circumstances are easy, He might testify. No, we find the Spirit's dedication to faithfully and fully, even with the knowledge of the sorry sort of people He would be working with, to point such ones to the glorious person of Jesus Christ for salvation ~~from sin and the hope of eternal life.~~ Do from sin and the hope of eternal life? A God who faithfully communicates to man what he needs to be delivered from the evil of this world. This is your God. This is a part of the increasingly high view of God we need to develop. But why, you might ask...why is it so important to have such a vision of God? Beloved, let us move to our second key point and notice the answer to the why question as we see...

## **II. The Call to Practice the Presence of the Holy Spirit (John 15:27)**

*...and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

Wonder of wonders...why did Jesus speak so much of the characteristics of the coming Holy Spirit who would indwell those who believe on Him? Because we are to be imitators of the Spirit. More in truth, we are to be tools through which the Spirit of God communicates to man the Lordship and Saviorhood of the Son of God and all to the glory of God the Father. Notice the first words there of verse 27, **"and you will testify also..."** Just like the Holy Spirit, you will testify. Now there seems to be a question as to whether this phrase is a statement or a command. Is Jesus simply speaking of something He knows to be true of the future or is He commanding the disciples saying, "YOU WILL testify!" I like both honestly. Here we have a call then to practice the presence of the Spirit. How could the first disciples, these who were about to enter a time of great distress, darkness and discouragement, seeing Jesus arrested, tried, beaten, scourged and crucified be strengthened and encouraged? Jesus reminds them of the person, power and purpose of the Holy Spirit, whom He had already promised back in Chapter 14 to be both with and in them when He came, and now says in effect that with His Holy Spirit within them, they are summoned to be the same kind of witness as the Holy Spirit. And so, likewise, we who are regenerated by the Spirit (made new); who are indwelt by the Spirit (empowered for service); are to take on the characteristics of the Spirit within us and be:

### **A. A Helpful Witness**

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Even as the Holy Spirit is the "Helper" – the one called along side to help or aid another; the one, who as we saw, willingly left the glories of heaven in order to patiently encourage and transform sinners into saints; we too, who have been called saints and set apart by the Spirit of God, are to go forth and be helpful witnesses – coming along side of both believers and unbelievers in their times of difficulty and distress and encouraging them with the truths of God's love, care and concern.

And even as the Holy Spirit willingly helps us in our weaknesses, we must learn by the Holy Spirit to be patient when wronged; to be loving when rejected; to be forgiving when maligned; to be diligent when grieved and unmoved when squelched by sinful and/or unregenerate hearts. The Spirit has had to put up with you and if the Spirit of God is in you, you can put up with those who are rebellious toward you. Listen to the words of 2 Timothy 2:14-16 – here is the picture of a helpful witness of Jesus Christ:

***24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.***

Beloved, sometimes our attitudes, especially toward those who are lost in there sins, bears little resemblance to the helpful patience and kindness of God that lead us to repentance. May we be helpful witnesses, coming along side the lost and lovingly pointing them to Jesus Christ. Will you be a helpful witness?

## **B. A Divine Witness**

And like the Holy Spirit who was sent by Jesus from God the Father, we, who according to Ephesians 2:1 were once "sons of disobedience" but by faith are now all sons of God (Galatians 3:26) – are sent by Jesus from God the Father, in the power of the Spirit to proclaim the glories of Christ.

I would like you to look at a passage that unites this position that will belong to those who follow Christ will also be sent out like the Son and the Spirit. Look with me at John 20:21-22 – the scene is Sunday evening after the resurrection. Jesus shows up again to the disciples and says...

***"Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."***

Here we see that the Divine Witness, the Holy Spirit, that had already been promised to be sent, would be the very power by which the disciples would become the divinely sent out witness of Jesus Christ. This promise of the Divine Witness, that is the Holy Spirit, to come upon those who believe in order to make them divine witnesses as well was made again in Acts 1:8 and was initiated on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles preached with boldness the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. In Acts 1:8 we read of the disciples becoming divine witnesses:

***but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses...even to the remotest part of the earth.***

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We can only be divine witnesses of the glories of Christ as we are walking with Him who is the Divine Witness, sent from God. Will you be a divine witness?

## C. A Truthful Witness

And even as the Holy Spirit is the Truthful Witness, being truth, revealing truth; we too, with the Word of God, which is the Sword of the Spirit, must be proclaiming only the truth concerning God, man, duty, salvation and eternal life. We must become increasingly people of the Book, proclaiming the truth of the Book. We must be proclaiming the truth about Jesus, sin and salvation as found in the Word of God.

In commenting on the need for the church to be a people of the Book and to return to the practice of faithful verse by verse teaching of the Word, Pastor Steven Lawson said, "This is the true nature of preaching. It is the man of God opening the Word of God and expounding its truths so that the voice of God may be heard, the glory of God seen, and the will of God obeyed." May we become increasing truthful witnesses, allowing the Spirit of truth within us to take all that we read and hear of the truth to proclaim it in such a way that the voice of God may be heard, the glory of God seen and the will of God obeyed." Will you be a truthful witness?

## D. A Faithful Witness

And finally, I call you to be faithful witnesses. Jesus said in our text, ***"and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning."*** I believe we see the idea of faithfulness here. These men had been with Jesus through thick and thin. They had sought to faithfully follow and serve Jesus, even when they did not always understand; even when their own sinfulness got in the way and they were willing to argue about who was the greatest among them while Jesus was there in their midst. But here Jesus reminds them that because of all they have seen and believed, they would be able to faithfully follow, even through the difficulties and hardships these disciples suffered through in order to be truthful and faithful witnesses. It is amazing to me that after the departure of Judas, the one who was marked out as the betrayer, not one of the other apostles, even in light of the persecution they had to endure for Christ, ever forsook Him. They were faithful to the end. These did indeed testify of Jesus. And just like we noted with the Spirit, it is not a might testify; it is not if the circumstances are right, or if my health holds out, or if my employer allows it, or if there is not some other pursuit that hinders me...no, it is "I will testify also...because I have beheld the Lamb of God who has taken away my sin and I confess and believe Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God, my Savior and my Lord." Rightfully living – watching your life and conduct that both words and deeds point to Jesus. ***Will you be a faithful witness?*** of God – of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Let us strive to practice the presence of the Spirit, being helpful, divine, truthful and faithful witnesses of the glorious salvation of Jesus Christ.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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