

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 Consoling Savior

The Believer's Relationship to the Spirit

John 16:5-11

5 But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

Some time back, my family and I were on our way to Fayetteville to do some shopping. While heading south, I saw a cloud of dust up a ways on the northbound side. As we got close, we saw that a small car had rolled several times and was off the side of the road. I quickly crossed the median to try to help, very concerned of what I would find. There was already one other car that had stopped and there were two people talking as I was looking for someone in the car that rolled. But I didn't see anyone in the car. I started looking around, wondering if the person had been thrown. All this was really just a matter of seconds when I saw that one of the two people by the other car was starting to collapse. He had already gotten out of the car, but had a pretty good cut to the head. I got him over to our van and we applied some pressure to his, waiting for emergency services. While we were waiting, I asked him what had happened. His response was, "I don't know exactly. I was driving in the left lane and looked down to change radio stations. When I looked up, I had drifted off the road on the left side and when I went to correct it I overcompensated and cut across the right lane, off the road and flipped the car several times." I was amazed that the man walked away with just a few cuts on his head.

This story reminds us just how easily and how quickly we can be distracted. And any distraction in your life has the potential to damage your relationship with the Lord and to diminish your testimony of Him. What is true in driving cars is just as true in following Jesus Christ. We can be easily distracted and before we know it we are drifting off the straight road or we can be completely out of control doing some flips and doing damage to our souls and to our testimonies of faith in Jesus Christ.

But just what form do such distractions take? Beloved, distractions are a dime a dozen and what distracts one person may not distract another. Be it a demanding work schedule; the preparation for the holidays with all the gatherings, all the busyness and all the presents; or be it family in simply providing for their needs, making dinner, doing the laundry, caring for the house; or even church, the working on a project, the planning of events. Then add something heavy to such things like some sickness, or suffering; perhaps a death in the family or maybe some intense animosities or difficulties with people and all of sudden we can be distracted, being overwhelmed by our circumstances and find our souls filled with sorrow and discouragement rather than the joy of the Lord and the encouragement of the Spirit of God.

In our text this morning we find Jesus once again lovingly rebuking the disciples as well as seeking to encourage them in a time where they are evidently distracted. How do I know they were distracted? Well, in verse six, Jesus says that because of what He had been telling them, their hearts were filled with sorrow. Why were their hearts filled with sorrow? Was this the intention of Jesus? I don't think so for in John 15:11 Jesus said He spoke so that their joy may be

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full. And in John 16:33 He says that He speaks to give them peace. So we know that something was distracting the disciples from hearing of this peace and joy and in its place allowing their hearts to be filled with dread and despair.

What was it that distracted them? I believe that they lost their focus. They were not really looking to what Jesus was saying and accomplishing for His glory and their good but rather were seeing everything from their own earthly perspective. Jesus had been telling them that He was leaving and that He would suffer and die. Jesus had told them that they would do a greater work than Himself – something that I am sure made them feel spiritually inept. Jesus had told them that they would be hated, persecuted, put out of the synagogue and some would even be killed. While this may be a poor illustration, for those of you that have attended college classes or even intense high school classes, remember that first week of school when you got the syllabuses for all your subjects? You saw all the assignments, all the tests dates, all the projects all the book reports and what did you say to yourself? “There’s no way, I’m a dead man!” It seemed completely overwhelming, right? These disciples were completely overwhelmed. How could they live boldly and effectively for Jesus when He was gone? How could they accomplish all the things Jesus was laying out? How could they endure all the hardship Jesus spoke of? These are the questions that Jesus answers in part in our text. If I might put in the form of a thesis or main idea I would say:

How can we keep ourselves from being distracted in our spiritual lives (kept from the practice of the means of grace; of time in the word; of prayer, of fellowship; of meditation, etc) so that we might live in joyful anticipation of eternal glory even in the midst of temporary hardships and sufferings; continually and effectively testifying of the person and work of Jesus Christ?

The answer to that question is found in our text. We keep ourselves from spiritual distractions by continually remembering the accomplishments of the Savior and the advantages of the Spirit.

I. The Accomplishments of the Savior (John 16:5-6)

5 But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

Jesus begins this passage with what really is a seemingly strange statement saying, **“But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’”** Let us remember that Jesus is teaching and reminding the disciples of those things that would encourage and enable them to be His effective, undistracted witnesses when He leaves. So what is Jesus reminding the disciples of here with this statement? I believe He is reminding them of two things.

First, Jesus wants them to remember that He is not just another human to whom they share equal responsibility to but that in addition to being human, Jesus is also God; He is their Lord. This statement, “I am going to Him who sent Me” while certainly used of Jesus on a number of occasions, is not a common human expression. It reminds us that Jesus came from heaven, that His origin was with the Father. In fact in John 16:28 Jesus says as much, **“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”** These statements were meant to remind the disciples that Jesus was the Son of God from all eternity; that He was sent by the Father and became a true man and that as God in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us, God revealed Himself on earth in human nature, in

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human form. It reminds us the mercy of God to come so near to we who are sinful, permitting Himself to be seen and heard. To remind us that God desires fellowship with man as He felt, ate, drank, slept, worked, suffered and died just as any other person. For Jesus to say that “I am going to the Him who sent Me...” testifies that He will be received, accepted and glorified by the Father by His resurrection from the dead and His ascension to the right hand of God where He will reign with the Father for all eternity and the eternal, almighty God. Here then Jesus reminds His disciples that by His coming down from the Father He proved Himself to be a real, natural man; and now by His returning to the Father, Jesus declares Himself to be the true, eternal God.

When you see the distractions of life, those things that might rob you of joyful fellowship with God, do not forget that God became man so that you might trust in Him for life, for peace and for salvation. Jesus is to be known and believed upon as both God and man and such a remembrance is a means to dissipate spiritual distractions in our lives.

So then, Jesus is not to be seen just as some addition to an already busy life that you may consider and regard as time allows but rather is to be seen as your life, your hope your all. Through the incarnation, that is God being made flesh and dwelling among us; and through His resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus proved Himself to be the God-man. This is the first accomplishment to remember.

And the second accomplishment to remember is the obedience of Jesus while upon this earth; an obedience meant to provide us an example by which we may live to the glory of God. I see this in part by the statement of Jesus when He says, **“and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’”**

Now some might remember that both Peter in John 13:35 and Thomas in John 14:5 asked questions about where Jesus was going; but the point here is truly the focus of the question. Peter did ask the question in John 13:35, but not because he was concerned for Christ’s accomplishments and glorification, but because he did not like the path Jesus was taking and would do what he could to prevent it. And when Thomas asked the question in John 14:5 it was again not focused upon Jesus and His accomplishment and glorification, but asked in doubt and discouragement. From the perspective of Peter and Thomas, the question of “where are you going?” was self-focused and meant “How does Jesus’ leaving impact my perception of life, right here and right now?” When Jesus presents the question in John 16:5, the point is “How does the leaving of Jesus bring Him glory and result in accomplishing much for both God and man?”

We can tend to look at our sufferings, our hardships, our mistreatments as personal tragedies and personal put outs rather than looking at them from the perspective of “how does this benefit others and glorify God?” This was Jesus’ perspective. In John 6:38 Jesus said, **“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”** Jesus was doing that for which God sent Him and do so perfectly so that in John 17:4 He could say to the Father, **“I have glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”** Jesus obediently did with will of the Father and because of that, because He glorified the Father in this way, was being received back into heaven. When the disciples began to be overwhelmed with what it was that was before them, they should have considered the obedience of Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, according to Hebrews 12:2. Jesus had an anticipation and joy in the midst of His sufferings because He knew the path to the Father included suffering and was obedient in spite of the suffering. And similarly, God promises joy and delight in His presence even though the path to that delight includes suffering. For most of us here, if the Lord tarries, will endure death, but will we endure

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death and any other suffering remember our Savior, who for the joy set before Him endure and has asked us to do likewise?

So then one way to help avoid spiritual distractions is to remember the accomplishments of the Savior, that the Son of God became the Son of Man so that you, as a son of man may become a son of God.

II. The Advantages of the Spirit (16:7-11)

7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

In addition to remembering the accomplishments of the Savior, John 16:7-11 reminds us to remember as well the advantages of the Spirit. Jesus begins by capturing the disciples' attention saying, ***“I tell you the truth...”*** The one who is the truth wants them to pay close attention to this teaching. And then Jesus says something most remarkable, ***“...it is to your advantage that I go away...”*** Could it be true that there is something even more advantageous to the believer than the physical presence of Jesus? It must be, Jesus said it was the truth. But just what are these advantages? I see two although the second one is rather detailed.

The first advantage of the Spirit as seen from verse 7 is that He is the divine Indweller. This is not the first time that Jesus has spoken to the disciples about the ministry of the Spirit. Both here and back in John 14:16 and following the Spirit of God is called the “Helper” – the Comforter, as some translations have it. Remember that the Greek word for “Helper” speaks of one who comes along side of another to help, instruct, defend or guide another. If you would look at John 14:16 for a moment, I would like to point something out. There we see Jesus saying, ***“I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.”*** By saying “another Helper” we are to remember that Jesus was also a Helper. Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, came to this earth, He came along side humanity to help, to instruct, to defend and to guide humanity in the truth concerning God and salvation. So why then the need of another Helper? Beloved, Jesus came as God with us – He took on the limitations of a human body to be our perfect Substitute; but being in human form means that Jesus could not indwell believers. He can be our substitute; He can be our Priest and King; He can be representing us before the Father's throne, but He cannot, as Jesus indwell believers. Therefore He would send the Spirit, who, according to John 14:17 does something incredible. Let us read there, ***“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 Spirit of God will not simply be God with us, but will be God in us.

This is such an important truth, not simply because thinking on it helps keep us from being distracted by earthly things, but because of what God intends to accomplish by indwelling His people. When the Jews and Romans had Jesus arrested, tried and eventually nailed to the cross, they believed that by executing Him they would be rid of Him and would be able to continue on in life without the influence of the Son of God. What a mistake! For they did not realize that in their own sin, they were accomplishing the will of God, namely that Jesus would proceed through His crucifixion and then resurrection to His exalted position at the right hand of the Father in heaven. And, once in heaven, Jesus would pour out the Spirit of God within the hearts of all who trusted in Him as Lord and Savior. So then, instead of dealing with just One

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Spirit-indwelt Servant in the person of Jesus, now the world would have to content with an entire body of Spirit-indwelt servants swarming the earth, proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ to all. Meanwhile, the chief Servant, who gave His life as a ransom for the many, sits at the right hand of God, praying for His people, that they would go forth in the power of the Spirit of God, proclaiming the truth and ensuring that the gates of hell will not prevail against them.

What a cure for discouragement and distractions; to remember that as a believer in Jesus Christ, as one whose life has been transformed by the power of God; whose eyes have been opened to see the beauty of Christ in light of the ugliness of one's own sinfulness; whose heart has been granted the gift of repentance, of turning from your sin to embrace and serve the living God and who has received the gift of faith to live for Jesus – within you is God; within you is the Spirit of Christ. So then, let us heed and rejoice in the words of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 which say,

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? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

If you believe on Jesus as your Savior, recognizing your need of His work on the cross as the only sufficient payment for your sins and the only means by which you may be made right with God, then you have the joy of not only knowing Jesus as God with you, but you also have the advantage of having the Spirit of Christ as God in you, who has done all the things I have mentioned and more. If we would consider more often the advantage of God in us, we might be less distracted with lesser things.

But there is a second advantage of the Spirit as seen from verses 8-11 is that He is the divine Empowerer. Not only does the Spirit of Christ dwell within us, but He also empowers us to accomplish the work Jesus gave us to do. Now then, this work of the Spirit in us is often overlooked in this passage. In verses 8-11 we see what is often referred to as the work of the Spirit in relation to unbelievers. And it is indeed true, as we will see, that the ministry of the Spirit of God is to ***“convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”*** Let us examine what this means but then I want to come back and put this into the context of how this is an advantage to believer as this is what I think gets missed.

So, the ministry of the Spirit is to ***“convict the world.”*** The word “convict” has a couple of senses, one being the legal, negative sense of condemning a criminal, but it also the sense of exposing, pointing out, or convincing someone of something. As one theologian has put it, the work of the Spirit is “shaming the world and convincing it of its own guilt, thus calling it to repentance [*The Gospel According to John*, 537]. So the purpose of this ministry of the Spirit is not simply to condemn the world, but rather to be exposing, convincing, and convicting the hearts and minds of unbelievers so that they feel, see, and understand their guilt and are brought to see that the only legal satisfaction for sinners is the blood of Christ. We must not forget in John 15:26 Jesus said that the ministry of the Spirit is to testify, to give witness, to point people to Jesus. And as the Spirit testifies of Jesus, He exposes the world to the reality of sin and to the need of salvation in Jesus.

The way the Spirit exposes this reality of sin and need of salvation is three-fold. First, the Spirit exposes “sin”. See that it does not say “sins” here or in verse nine, but rather simply “sin.” All sins may be forgiven except one and that is the sin of unbelief in Jesus and so Jesus said in verse 9, ***“concerning sin because they do not believe in Me.”*** Believe what? Remember verse 5, that Jesus is the Son of God, sent from heaven, having taken human form in order to be

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our substitute and example; that by trusting Him as our sacrifice and following Him in obedience even as He was obedient to the Father and taken up in glory, we might believe Him to be Emmanuel, the God/man who saves us from our sins. Not to believe this is sin. This is the condition of the unregenerate heart. It does not want to face the reality of needing the work of Christ, or at least the work of Christ alone. The unbeliever wants to contribute, wants to merit or obtain the favor of God; but the Spirit of God testifies and exposes that man's greatest sin is his refusal to take God at His word, that Jesus alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. I like how John MacArthur put it, *“The sole issue that determines people's eternal destiny is how they react to the Spirit's convicting ministry concerning their own sin and the provision of forgiveness by grace through Jesus Christ.”*

The second way in which the Spirit exposes the guilt of the world is **concerning righteousness**. The righteousness spoken of here is the character of Jesus – the righteousness of Jesus – the perfection of Jesus. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to expose to people the perfection of Jesus so that they might see the reality of their imperfection and therefore their need of Him. For those who have come to faith in Christ, there ought to have been a time when you saw the ugly evil of your heart in contrast to the beautiful holiness of Jesus. There ought to have been a time when you have realized the impossibility of salvation by any effort of your own apart from the complete work of Jesus.

When Jesus says in verse ten **“because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me”** He is reminding His disciples that the supreme evidence of His perfect righteousness is founded in the fact that Father does in fact receive Him into heaven. According to Habakkuk 1:13 the Lord's **“eyes are too pure to approve evil, and [He] cannot look on wickedness with favor.”** If the righteousness of Jesus was not perfect, then the Father would not have allowed Jesus to sit at His right hand. And it is the Spirit's ministry to expose people to the righteousness of Christ, so that as they see God's willingness to charge their sin on Jesus at the cross and charge the righteousness of Jesus to their lives, they might be made fit for heaven.

The final way in which the Spirit is said to expose guilt to the world according to verse eleven is **“concerning judgment because the ruler of this world has been judged.”** The idea here is that the world, apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit, will not rightly assess the person of Jesus Christ. The world's judgment is skewed and sinful and so the Spirit's ministry is to reveal this poor judgment. The ruler of this world is a reference to Satan who already made his poor judgment concerning the righteousness of God and was cast from heaven. Therefore he has already been judged and defeated at the cross. And at the consummation of the ages, at the end of time, Satan's final sentence will be carried out as he and his angels will be cast into hell and the lake of fire to be eternally tormented for their rebellion against God. What a sobering reminder and warning to all who would consider having a view of Christ that is not in keeping with who He is and what He has done according to the testimony of the Word of God.

This exposing of the world's guilt with regard to its sin of unbelief, its ignorance of the perfect righteousness of Christ and of its false assessment of the person of Christ is meant to lead a person to one of two responses – either repentance and a turning to Jesus as Lord and Savior or rejection, leading them to eternal condemnation.

But as we close, I want to make this comment and application. What we just considered about the ministry of the Spirit is biblical, but what advantage is this ministry of the Holy Spirit to the believer. Jesus said that this was an advantage in verse 7, so how do we apply it? I would like you to look back up at John 15:26-27 where we read these words:

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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.

Notice in verse 26 that Jesus said the Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus; that is the Holy Spirit will proclaim to the world the sin of unbelief in Jesus as Lord and Savior, the guilt of not appreciating the righteousness of Christ that man needs applied to his life and the guilt of not properly assessing the person of Christ and therefore being condemned. This you know. But notice the first words of 15:27 again, **“and you will testify also...”** Just like the Spirit, we are to have a ministry of giving testimony of Jesus. This is only possible if the Spirit of Jesus is empowering us, is enabling us to give such a testimony. The advantage of having the Holy Spirit in us then is having Him who knows the mind of Christ guide us in our testimony of Christ. While the Spirit of Christ can and does expose sin, righteousness and judgment to the world by other means, one of the chief means He has chosen are the followers of Christ. Beloved, because the Holy Spirit resides within us, He uses us to speak to the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. Isn't this the testimony of Jesus who said in Acts 1:8 that His followers would be His witnesses, those who would teach the world concerning sin, their need for the righteousness of Christ and the judgment that awaits them if they fail to repent?

In Acts 2 we see this pattern of testimony in the preaching of Peter who in verses 14-23 (23) exposed sin; in verse 24-32 (27) exposed the righteousness of Christ and in verses 33-36 (35) exposed judgment.

Beloved, I would challenge you to be wary of distractions that would cause your own soul to drift away from these truths. And how can you minimize the effect of distractions? By keeping your heart fixed on the accomplishments of Christ and the advantages you have because of the Spirit of Christ. Only then will we be able to live in joyful anticipation of eternal glory, even in the midst of temporary hardships, continually and effectively testifying of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria

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