

† 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 Assurance*** *John 16:12-15*

12 I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

During an earthquake that occurred many years ago, the inhabitants of a small village were greatly alarmed, and at the same time surprised, at the calmness and apparent joy of an old lady, whom they all knew. After some time one of them, addressing the old lady, said, "Mother, aren't you afraid?" "No," she replied, "I rejoice to know that I have a God that can shake the world."

What a blessing belongs to every believer who would but avail him or herself to living in light of such an assurance; that even when the world may be shaking; when everything is falling down and crushing in all around; there is a faith and there is an assurance that says, "My God is in control of all this and my God is good!" At issue however is that while we may profess that God is sovereign and confess that He is good; we often find ourselves feeling as though we are in the dark; unable to see how our current situations could actually prove to be to the glory of God and to our benefit. And a part of the reason for this beloved is that the Christian life is a life of faith, a life that leads us into circumstances that teach us to trust in and on God more.

I have always believed and taught that if God were ever to reveal to any one of us the things we would go through from now until glory we would most likely run off screaming in the night; truly believing ourselves incapable of living through such things. As a case in point, we have before, here in our text, the continued consoling words of the Savior to His disciples. These men had heard of just a few of the things that awaited both Jesus and them in the hours to come and the days that would follow. Jesus had spoken to them of the coming persecution they would face in verses 1-4 as well as the restated promise in verses 5-11 of the Holy Spirit's role in their lives that would enable them to testify about Jesus even as the Holy Spirit would testify of Jesus – primarily through His Spirit-filled followers.

In the few verses of John 16:12-15, we have Jesus making assurances to His disciples; assurances that He is very much understanding their fears and knows that they would like to know more. In addition to this sympathetic understanding of Jesus, Jesus also assures His disciples that they will themselves grow to understand more as the Holy Spirit comes to them and that with this understanding they will all the more live for and to the glory of God. And from all this I believe we can draw on the same principles and know that Jesus has a gracious understanding of our circumstances; that we have the promise, as we walk with Jesus of a guided and growing understanding of His purposes and finally, that with such a guided understanding, we will be better equipped to glorify Christ, that is to manifest the reality of His presence in our lives. These are the assurances Jesus gives to all who would be His disciples; His followers. So let us consider them in more detail.

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I. We have the assurance of His gracious understanding (16:12)

“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

If there is a verse in the Upper Room discourse that best illustrates the truth of Hebrews 4:14-15, it is this one. In Hebrews 4:14-15 we read these words...

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

As Jesus mentally, emotionally and spiritually prepares Himself for the agonies of the cross, as He considers the crushing weight of sin upon His physical body as well as upon the horrors of having the face of His beloved Father turn away as His becomes our sin offering, He yet always remains mindful; He understands and sympathizes with the weakness of His disciples' emotions and hearts. While what Jesus was about to go through was far greater and far worse than what any of the disciples would face, Jesus, because of this, is able to tell them something that would later give them great comfort. Jesus understands what they are going through. Jesus knows what they are thinking and knows both what they need to hear as well as what they are just unable to hear at that time. Do you know that Jesus sympathizes with your heartaches? Did Jesus Himself not also experience heartaches and difficulties? Of course He did. And while Jesus was experiencing these things, He says to His disciples, ***“I have many more things to say to you...”*** Jesus had taught the disciples everything they needed to know in seed form. Every precept for living for God had been granted, but the practice of such things had not been fully developed. That seed of truth had not yet been cultivated into a flowering plant. Such would be the role of the Holy Spirit, but yet Jesus says here something profound by saying that He so much longs to teach them many more things; to see the truth developed within them. What a comfort to know that Jesus has more to say; that we have not exhausted the treasury of divine wisdom nor will we. The blessed truth that even if we know all the words of Christ as revealed in the gospel accounts, we yet would not know all that Jesus has for us.

When Jesus says that He has more to say to the disciples, I believe that that could be taken both negatively and positively. Let us consider it first negatively as this is the most obvious offering of verse 12. Jesus says that He has more to say but that such teaching would be more than they could bear. Beloved, Jesus understands us and is gracious to us, not giving us more than we can handle. I have no doubt that Jesus might have loved to discuss with the disciples what Paul would later communicate by the Spirit of God, that is how the death of Jesus, the beloved Rabbi and Companion of these disciples, that by His spilt blood and broken body would justify, would make all who believe upon Him right with God, fit for eternity, transferred from their previously deserved destination of damnation in the eternal fires of hell to the glorious kingdom of the beloved Son of God. Why didn't Jesus have this discussion with the disciples right then and there? Was it merely because there was not enough time? No. Was it because these disciples, being uneducated and common folk could not grasp theological truths? No, as Jesus would use these men to preach and proclaim such truths. What was the reason? Because they could not

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bear it. It was a truth that they, given their current circumstances and state of mind could not bear because it involved the crucifixion of their beloved Lord.

And you know what, some 2000 years later; nothing has changed for those who would be disciples of Jesus. While we have the blessing of looking back on the cross but also seeing what it accomplished, do we not find ourselves in circumstances were we feel we are in the dark; that we lack the understanding of how God is glorified given the situation? Beloved, He knows what our hearts can take – He knows what our hearts need to hear and when we need to hear it; while we fumble around at times in seeming confusion at the chain of events before us; unable to fully discern how God might be glorified at the death of an infant; or at the sudden taking of a loved one; or of a car accident; or of a diagnosis of disease; or agonizing legal proceeding; or of the loss of job or the increased burden of a current job; of a child that seems difficult to reach; of an unexpected expense or bill that strangles already taxed finances – beloved; Jesus knows; Jesus cares; Jesus understands how you feel and in time, be it that hour, or the next day, or the next year, or perhaps in eternity; Jesus has something to say to you. Our responsibility is to believe that He understands and therefore to listen for His voice. I cannot explain why some of you are or will go through certain things. I promise you that some of you will find your way into my office of home and we will cry together because of some heartache and we will want to know more than what Jesus has revealed at that moment. But will you believe that He has more to say to you and that while at that moment you may not be ready because you could not bear it, He will, in time say more to you? Will you listen? He may give a full answer or He may simply comfort you in the present to prepare you for another seeming mystery; but know that Jesus has much to say to you.

And in fact this leads us to the second point. For not only does Jesus grant us His gracious understanding which ought to assure us in time of difficulty, but we are also assured of a guided understanding.

II. We have the assurance of a guided understanding (16:13)

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

Let us read verse 13. Here we see the conjunction, the tie to what Jesus said in verse 12 connect to verse 13 with that word “but” – Jesus has much to say to us in times of hardship and confusion and sometimes the timing is such that we can bear anymore than what we already know; “but” – as if Jesus is saying, “in order to continue to communicate to you; in order to see the seed of My teaching bud into the full flower of faith; remember the promise of the Holy Spirit.”

For the disciples and for us, we do not hear what Jesus has to say to us by means of His physical, earthly voice. Nor do we have the physical presence of Jesus whereby He speaks to us. He does not stand next to us with physical arms and say, “There; there!” While that might sound comforting, if Jesus, in His physical body, was limited to comforting just one believer at a time; it might be too long and too late before we ever experienced the comfort of God. But here in John 16:13 the disciples are reminded again of such a precious truth – “He” – He who? The paracletos; the Comforter; the Helper; the Advocate; the Instructor; the Truth of God – Jesus says, **“He will guide you...”**; that is, He will show the way; reveal the path; He will teach; He will

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provide you with all that is necessary for living for Jesus; for pleasing God, regardless of the circumstances, regardless of who might be persecuting you; regardless of the deepest lost you have experienced. The Spirit of Truth; that is the Spirit of Him who is the Truth; that is the Spirit of Jesus; **"...will guide you into all truth..."** The Spirit of Christ will continue the teaching of Christ. The Spirit of Christ will guide believers into an every increasing knowledge of the truth. Isn't this the command of 2 Peter 3:18, **"but grow in the grace and knowledge (or understanding) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."**

Beloved, for reasons known only to God, God finds it much better for the development of our faith; much more reasonable for the growth of our trust, if we learn to apply and excel in the precepts of Christ little by little, day by day. If God revealed to us everything that would happen and how we would respond to such things, where would be the faith? And yet Hebrews 11:6 so adamantly declares, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him." Without going through the trials, experiencing the heartaches, or suffering through the hardship, I have no real means of appreciating what it is that Jesus has saved me from; I have no motivation to look to Him and cry, "Lord save me!" The following after Christ is a journey, an experience, guided by the Holy Spirit by which He reveals to us day by day, through the trials of life, the beauty of Christ who saves us from the wretched effects of sin which are only realized in part on earth but will be eternally and intensely realized in hell. If we were to know the end from the beginning, we might be tempted to fall away because our faith was not developed.

Let me illustrate it this way by appealing to the example of Peter whom we find here as part of this Upper Room sermon of Jesus. In Luke 22:33 we find Peter, who upon realizing that Jesus was headed toward the cross said, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" Of course we know that Jesus responded to this with words that said in effect, "Are you sure, Peter...if you knew everything that was about to happen, even in just a few hours, would you do this...do you know your heart that well...for I tell you that you will deny Me." And Jesus did in fact tell Peter this, did He not? But what if Jesus had said more? What if Jesus said to Peter, "I see you as an old and grayed hair man and you are bound by those whom you do not know. I see all the pains and heartaches your martyr feet will tread and how they will lead you to physical death as horrific as My own." Should Jesus have told Peter such things? While it may not have made Peter into a Judas, it might have turned him into a Demas, one of Paul's helpers who ended up deserting him because he came to love the present world and its ease rather than Christ. It is better for us not to know of some of the things which the Lord has in store for us so that we might be prepared in time to endure such things in a manner that glorifies God. And to this end, the Holy Spirit will guide us into a growing understanding of how to live for God and why God allows us or others to go through the things we do.

But Jesus also tells us here about how the Holy Spirit guides believers. While it may seem to go without saying Jesus tells us of the intensely narrow loyalty of the Spirit of truth along with the unity of the Godhead concerning what believers are to know. Reading the rest of verse 13, **"...for He will not speak [truth] on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."** The Spirit speaks in accordance with the divine will – no member of the Trinity acts independently from the others with regard to divine will. They are unified and work in harmony in fulfilling their appointed responsibilities for the salvation of man and the glory of the Godhead. The Spirit is no maverick that does whatever it takes to get

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the job done even if that means bending the rules – rather the Spirit always acts in a manner consistent with the will of God. In this way the Spirit is just like Jesus of whom it is recorded in John 5:30;

I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

And just what is it that both Jesus and the Spirit of truth wanted communicated – the glorious, sovereign and saving will of God; that whoever believes on the work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved. It would be the work of the Holy Spirit, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus into heaven, to take all the truths about Jesus and by inspiration, move the apostles to pen the words of the New Testament letters that would explain and expound the words of Christ. And it would be the work of the Holy Spirit by what we call illumination, that is bringing to light and disclosing or revealing, the truth of Jesus within the heart, bringing a person to a saving knowledge of Jesus. Do you have the assurance of this guided and growing understanding of Jesus? Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

III. We have the assurance of a glorifying understanding (16:14-15)

“14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.”

Let us consider our final point; that we can have the assurance of a glorifying understanding. Let us read verses 14-15 again. Here we learn of a few more assuring truths concerning the work of the Holy Spirit.

First, and as we noted already, the Spirit always acts in a manner consistent with the will of God; and because of this, we have the assurance that what the Spirit does will always glorify Jesus. **“He will glorify Me...”** What does it mean to “glorify” Jesus? Simply put, the work of the Spirit of truth is to point people to Jesus; to reveal the splendor of His life, to disclose the beauty and the majesty of Jesus. The Spirit’s ministry is to move peoples’ eyes from themselves and onto Jesus; to behold Jesus and then to become like Jesus. And remember that Jesus had already taught the disciples that the Spirit would be within them, and all who believe in John 14:17; and has already taught them in John 15:27 that the disciples would testify, would disclose, would teach whatever it was that the Spirit also testified and taught. In this way, the Spirit of God glorifies the Son through us, through those of us who believe and are committed to seeing Jesus glorified.

But not only does the Spirit always act in a manner that glorifies or points people to the supremacy of Jesus; but second, we read that the Spirit of truth will reveal the heart and will of Jesus. We read at the end of verse 14, **“for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.”** Beloved, the Spirit will never communicate to a believer, whether by the word or through circumstances, anything that is inconsistent with what Jesus taught or did. What a blessed assurance this is – that the heart of Jesus is consistently communicated by the Spirit of Jesus.

One of the reasons why some have political concerns about our new president is because we know that this new leader does not share the same view, the same will, the same vision of

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America as did our last president. That may be good or bad, but the point is, such a knowledge that things will be different can be unsettling. I cannot imagine how difficult it would be to follow after God if after getting to know Him by or through Jesus, we were told we would now follow after Him by an other, if that had a different mindset, a different vision of what it meant to follow after God; a different slant on the truth. But we are assured that the Spirit of Truth takes that which was of Christ's and reveals it to us.

And finally then, to assure us that both the Spirit of truth and the teachings of Jesus are not only consistent with each other but also consistent with the Father's will, Jesus reminds the disciples in verse 15 that all that He has taught and did, and therefore all that the Spirit will teach and do, came from the same source, from the Father. Here is the Trinity working together in unity to teach you what is needful; that you might know you are a sinner; separated from God; alienated from God; a rebel against God by birth, by choice and by action; a sinner that that deserves eternal separation from God; condemnation and damnation in a place of eternal torment; not because God delights in such punishment on people, but because people find no delight in Him and God will not force a person to delight in Him. By His Spirit, He grants to sinners faith; a spiritual sight to see their condition; to behold the beauties of God and the wonders of Christ; to cry out for mercy, grace and forgiveness. And God grants the gift of repentance, that ability and desire to turn from the actions of sin and to now delight in the actions of God.

And so, let me ask you...do you have these assurances at work in you life? Do you honestly believe that Jesus understand your circumstances; that He is acquainted with your heartaches and troubles; and that He has an answer for such but sometimes does not give it you because He knows its more than you can handle at that moment? You can know that you are believing this when you find comfort in simply trusting that even though the ground may shake, that you have a God that can indeed shake the world. Someone has said that assurance is Job sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, “I know that my Redeemer lives” (Job 19:25), as well as saying, “Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him” (Job 13:15). Let us grow in such an understand, knowing that it is the Spirit of truth who does this, through the Word of God, disclosing to us that which is to come and let us be assured that if we give heed to the Spirit of truth through the reading of the Word of God, we can know that we are in the divine will, that our lives are loved and important to the Lord because the Lord is using them to point people to Himself. May we rejoice in the gracious understanding of our Lord and be guided by the Spirit into an increased understanding of Jesus and His ways, always glorifying Him, that is pointing people to Him and His ways. This is our hope; this is our assurance. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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December 7, 2008