

4. The Promised Holy Spirit

John 14:15-31

Jesus' Final Days on Earth

We are carrying on from our previous study on the last evening before Christ's crucifixion, where Jesus and the eleven disciples reclined on couches around a low table at the Last Supper. As Jesus continued to share His heart with the disciples, I imagine them hanging on to every word as Christ spoke some of the most profound teachings the disciples had ever heard. The Lord only had a short time to prepare His disciples before departing to the Garden of Gethsemane. He knew that what would take place that evening would make it seem all was lost, which was very far from the truth. He carried on by encouraging them with His following words:

¹⁵If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you (John 14:15-20).

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

Jesus promised that He would ask the Father and He would send "another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth" (vs. 16-17). These eleven men reclining around the table were not extraordinary "super saints;" instead, the Lord chose them because they were just like you and me—ordinary people. The religious leaders had little regard for the disciples, thinking them uneducated and not seminary (yeshiva) trained in the five books of Moses. However, after the disciples were filled with the Spirit at Pentecost, they astonished those who thought so little of them: "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

The Apostles were chosen because they were ordinary, uneducated men so that the glory and power of God could be made evident. They were not great men of God; they were men of a Great God. The Lord's choice of men should encourage us all when we consider what an all-powerful God can do with ordinary men and women like you and me. Luke, the writer of the Gospel of Luke, spoke about this promise of the Holy Spirit in his second book, the Book of Acts:

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about (Acts 1:4).

Jesus called the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost; "the gift that the Father promised" What is a promise? It is a declaration or assurance that one will do a particular action or make something happen. God's promise was given to the disciples reclining around the table with Jesus and to all who believed and trusted in Christ. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God. What

does one have to do to earn a gift? Absolutely nothing! Otherwise, it would not be a gift. When employees are paid for working all week, does the boss give them wages as a gift? Of course not! They worked hard to get what they deserved for working all week. A gift is not dependent on a person's behavior. The God we serve is a perfect Father who loves to give good gifts to His children, and it is not because they earned what He freely gives. The promised gift of God is also addressed a few passages later, also in the Book of Acts:

³⁸Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And **you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** ³⁹The **promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call**” (Acts 2:38-39).

God's character is bound up in this promise that *all* who receive forgiveness of sins will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to the eleven who sat around the table and to all who believe, including many in distant, far-off lands who are also called to obey the Gospel message. If the news of the Gospel has come to you, and you sincerely believe and turn your life over to Christ, you are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit the moment you believe. The Apostle Paul also wrote of the promise given to all believers:

¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. **When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,** ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

To what is Paul referring in saying that a seal is placed on us when we believe? In the days when the New Testament was written, a seal was an identifying mark that signified that a contract had been made. The one who put the seal on the document or branded an animal was now the owner or the one with whom people had to deal if they tried to break the seal or steal the animal. The seal of God is the Holy Spirit.

The Paraklētōs

In the original Greek language, the One the Father sends is called the *Paraklētōs*. This word described the Holy Spirit and was translated in the New International Version as the “Advocate,” Who will be with us forever. The King James Version translated *Paraklētōs* as “Comforter.” The word *comforter* has changed significantly since John Wycliffe initially used it in the first translation of the Bible from Greek into English. William Barclay, the commentator, writes:

The word comes from the Latin *fortis*, which means *brave*, and a comforter enabled some dispirited creature to be brave. Nowadays, *comfort* has to do almost solely with sorrow; a comforter sympathizes with us when we are sad. Beyond a doubt, the Holy Spirit does that, but to limit His work to that function is sadly to belittle Him. We often talk about being able to cope with things. That is precisely the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit substitutes a defeated life for victorious living.¹

¹ William Barclay. *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John. Volume 2*, Page 167. Printed by Saint Andrews Press.

Do those two words, *promise* and *gift*, of the Holy Spirit change your thoughts about the Holy Spirit?

The Greek word *paraklētos* is found in the New Testament only five times. John's Gospel uses it four times (John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7), and it is also used once in the First Letter of John (1 John 2:1). In ancient Hellenistic texts, the word *paraklētos* was used to describe an advocate, but not in a professional sense as we use it today. An advocate was a friend or patron who came alongside someone to speak for them when accused. When one reads the New Testament, the description of how the Holy Spirit comes alongside us is so varied that He cannot be called just an Advocate, Counselor, or Comforter. There is not a single word that describes what He does. We should think of the *paraklētos* as our helper alongside us, which is precisely how the New American Standard Version Bible (NASB) translates the original Greek. Now that Jesus was leaving the disciples, He comforted them by telling them about the Divine Helper.

The Holy Spirit is not a force as in the *Star Wars* movies; neither is He the Holy Ghost, as one translation names Him, thus making Him seem scary to kids. The Holy Spirit is a person and fully God. He is the One who gives us help in every situation and trial. He will provide strength when we are weary (2 Corinthians 12:9), and insight when we are counseling someone, and He will remind us of God's promises when we are in a tight spot (John 14:26). He encourages us when we are low, and He will speak through us when we appear before a judge for being a Christian (Luke 12:11-12).

Consider the change that came over the disciples after they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Remember how they had fled from Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane? Think of how Peter could not confess Christ before a young girl (Matthew 26:71) and denied that he knew Jesus. However, after the Spirit came, courage, boldness, and bravery were displayed. No longer were the disciples huddled together in the upper room, away from the world, searching for answers and trying to grasp what had happened. After the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, they were sent back into the world. The Holy Spirit empowered God's Word when they spoke and endorsed their message by accompanying the Word of God with wonderful signs:

²⁹Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and **spoke the word of God boldly** (Acts 4: 29-31).

What changes do you see in the disciples before and after their experience in the Upper Room?

When Jesus described the coming of the Holy Spirit to the eleven, He called Him *another Advocate* (John 14:16). This word *another* means another of the same kind. He is like Christ—in fact, He is called the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9, 1 Peter 1:11). He is also called the Spirit of Truth:

...the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you (John 14:17).

The Holy Spirit had been with them until that day, but Jesus told the eleven that He would be *in* them when He came. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers and empowered them, He would baptize (dip into, immerse) them into the spiritual Body of Christ: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Spirit of God would reside *in* them, and not just with them as before. Before Pentecost, the thought that the Spirit had been with them could be the following:

- 1) A reference to the presence of Christ living with them as they went from place to place with Him, especially since John the Apostle wrote of Jesus that He had the Spirit without measure (John 3:34).
- 2) The reference to the Spirit being with them could also be about the time He sent them out in ministry, giving them authority and power to lay hands on the sick and cast out demons (Matthew 10:8, Luke 9:1-2). Their ministry of doing the works of Jesus resulted from the Spirit being *with* them, but He was not *indwelling* them until the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit could only come and live in them because their hearts were purified by the sacrificial, substitutionary work of Christ on the cross, “for he purified their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9).

Jesus then told the disciples that when the *paraklētos* came *within* them, as He did on the Day of Pentecost, from that point on, the Holy Spirit would teach them and remind them of all things Christ had taught them.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will **teach you all things** and will remind you of everything I have said to you (John 14:26).

As for you, the **anointing** you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as **his anointing teaches you about all things** and as that **anointing** is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him (1 John 2:27).

Does that mean that we no longer need Bible teachers? What do you think? If we still need teachers, what can it mean?

When it comes to these two passages, my belief about the Holy Spirit’s teaching us all things is that the Spirit will give us awareness about what is of God and what is not. There is a “know-so” within the core of our being. Paul the Apostle wrote: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16). Paul is saying that when a person is right with God, there is an inner witness of peace. It is the same when a person hears the truth; an “Amen!” resounds within. A person may come to Christ like a little child with little knowledge of Who Jesus is, but the Spirit will reveal the truth, even if a person does not have a copy of the Bible. Of course, we still need to meditate on God’s Word, and the Holy Spirit will give us insight. The presence of the Spirit (the anointing) in one’s life will reveal more and more of the things of Christ if one is open to learning.

A Rhema Word of the Spirit

As the Holy Spirit is our helper and guides us into all truth, the Holy Spirit can give us a "*Rhema*" word of God. This kind of revelatory word is sometimes called a "**word in season**" (Proverbs 15:23) or an apt word right on time when needed. What is meant by a *Rhema* word? Two Greek words are translated into English as Word, *Rhema* and *Logos*. The Greek word *Rhema* means an utterance, a revelatory picture, a vision, or a timely word. It can be a portion of Scripture that "speaks" to the heart of a believer, i.e., something highly relevant to a current situation in a believer's life, or it can be a clear, revelatory thought to take a particular action. It often has a "know-so" within the core of a person's life. The other word, *Logos*, speaks of Scripture that is read and meditated on in the Bible. We need both.

Unless one can check out the Greek translation, we cannot know the writer's intent, but the distinction between the two words is essential for us to understand. For instance, Jesus said, "**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [*rhema*] that proceeds out of the mouth of God**" (Matthew 4:4). In another place, Christ said, "**The words [*rhema*] that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life**" (John 6:63). The thought is that there are certain times in certain situations when God breathes life into a passage from the Scriptures that will meet a need, or a particular leading of the Spirit to take a specific course of action. For instance, when Paul was hindered from preaching the word of God in Asia, he had a vision of a man of Macedonia inviting him to cross into Europe and preach in Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). In Paul's case, it was a revelatory vision.

The Spirit of God may speak in a time of prayer, maybe with a simple phrase that pops into your mind, but it can also be words from Scripture or a song, etc. God can use many ways to speak a "*Rhema*" word to His people, just as He used many different illustrations, stories, and parables to communicate while He was with His disciples. A true revelation from God, a "*Rhema*" word, will never contradict, supersede, or go against the Scriptures. We must be open to receiving this type of encouragement and direction from the Holy Spirit, but we must always check any impressions against the plumb line²

The Word of God and the Holy Spirit will always agree, as they are from the same source, and if something comes from God, it will often have His accompanying peace. We should be careful about giving directional words to young Christians, though, for those with little experience of being led by the Spirit can be led astray as they look up to those older in the Lord. We should not be a junior Holy Spirit to others. Paul the Apostle helps us here: "**But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification, encouragement, and comfort**" (1 Corinthians 14:3). When it comes to giving words to others, it is wise to ask the Lord before we offer it to evaluate if it will edify, encourage, or comfort them, and limit ourselves to those three.

Obedience: The Key to His Presence

Carrying on with the conversation around the table, the Lord now talks about practicing the presence of the Holy Spirit. The precious presence of the Spirit rests on those who keep the Word of God and obey Christ:

² of the Word of God, whether personal or coming to us from another person or source. A plumb line is a weight hanging by a cord. Gravity ensures that the weight hangs perfectly straight, thus allowing a builder to ensure a structure is vertically aligned. Nowadays, builders mostly use a spirit level.

²¹**Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.** The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”
²²Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”²³Jesus replied, “**Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.** My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.
²⁴**Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.** These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.²⁵“All this I have spoken while still with you.²⁶But the Advocate, **the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.²⁸“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.²⁹I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.³⁰I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me,³¹but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me (John 14:21-31).

The special presence of the Spirit will remain on us as we obey Christ’s teaching. When the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord Jesus at His baptism, John the Apostle wrote that He came as a dove and remained on Christ:

I saw the Spirit come down from heaven **as a dove** and **remain** on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, “the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and **remain** is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (John 1:32-33).

Have you ever seen a dove fly down and sit on someone? I have seen pigeons land on someone, usually for food! When my wife and I lived in England, one of our favorite places to take people was a place in London called Trafalgar Square. This area in London seems to be where all the pigeons gather! Four pigeons will also sit on your arm and fight for a spot on your head! I have never heard of a dove resting on a person, though; doves are of the same genus as pigeons but are behaviorally very different. In the above passage of Scripture, we see a description of the Spirit descending like a dove upon the Lord Jesus and remaining. The Spirit did not look like a dove; He is described as coming *like a dove*. What was on John's mind when he drew the analogy of the Holy Spirit’s coming like a dove?

Doves are very timid and skittish. By that, I mean that the slightest thing scares them off. Any sudden noises, any quick movement, and they are gone. When we become believers, and the Spirit comes to live in us, He remains with the Christian for the rest of eternity. He will never leave us. However, the presence of the Spirit in us can be easily grieved to the extent that we lose something of the intimacy with the Spirit when we disobey Him. The presence of the Spirit, called the anointing by John the Apostle, indwells us: “**As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him**” (1 John 2:27). The presence of the Spirit must be guarded as a sacred trust, and nurtured by quick

repentance. We must be quick to repent and forsake any sin if we want intimacy with Christ and have the Spirit remain ungrieved on us. The Spirit descended and remained upon Jesus, meaning He was at home as He rested upon the Lord.

R.T. Kendall explains it this way in his book entitled, *The Sensitivity of the Spirit*:

That the Holy Spirit descended and *remained* on Jesus tells us as much about Jesus as it does about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was at home with Jesus. They were mutually adjusted to each other. Jesus carried no bitterness or hate, no grudges, panic, or spirit of vindictiveness to drive away the gentle Spirit. Matthew describes him as "gentle and humble in heart," Jesus did not quarrel or cry out (Matthew 11:29), and "a bruised reed he will not break" (Matt. 11:20). He was always ready to restore a person's faith and never struck out to hurt another.³

The Apostle Paul instructed us: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The Holy Spirit has feelings, and we can hurt His feelings when we grieve Him by the things we do. The Greek word translated as "grieve" (*lupeo*) comes from *lupee*, which means "pain" or "sorrow." It is the opposite of joy.

We know from the Apostle Paul that the Holy Spirit can also be quenched. When Paul wrote, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire" (1 Thessalonians 5:19), the words *put out* are translated from the Greek word *sbennumi*, which means "to quench." In the ancient Greek world, it generally referred to extinguishing a fire or putting out burning objects. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the people gathered in the Upper Room as what seemed to be "tongues of fire" (Acts 2:3). Paul's warning not to quench the Spirit can only mean that the Spirit's fire can be put out.

Listening to the Spirit's impressions and living one's life in obedience to the Lord are the keys to walking and keeping in step with the Spirit. Jesus made this clear in this passage to the disciples:

²³Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." ²⁴Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me (John 14:23-24, Emphasis mine).

We must make an effort to know Christ's teaching and walk in obedience to what we learn. The Lord says that this is proof that you are a Christian, i.e., you obey what Jesus taught. He is looking for God-lovers. Those in a love relationship with Jesus Christ follow His teaching, not only when men's eyes are on them but also when nobody's eyes are on them but God's alone. The more you are obedient to the Spirit at a heart level, the more the Spirit's power will flow through you. Paul calls it keeping in step with the Spirit: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16-18).

What he's talking about is for the believers in Christ to live in such a way that they walk in obedience to the Word of God and the impulses of the Holy Spirit. Like an army battalion marching, we must keep close to one another and keep in step as we march in tune with the Spirit's

³ R. T. Kendall. *The Sensitivity of the Spirit*. Published by Charisma House, Lake Mary, Florida. 2002. Page 26.

leading and guiding. When we get out of step with the Holy Spirit, we should be quick to repent and change our attitudes and actions so that we can quickly get back in step with Him and walk in His ways. If we keep ourselves in step with the Word of God and the Spirit of God, the presence of God will be with us and in us. The Spirit's presence will be apparent to those around us.

The Prince of this World

Jesus then continued to prepare them for the time ahead of them by saying:

I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me (John 14:30).

Every time we sin, we open the door a little bit more for the enemy to make inroads into our character to influence us toward doing his will. With Jesus, it was completely different. He never gave the enemy any opportunity to get so much as a toe in the door of His life. Jesus was saying, "He has nothing on me." The testimony of those who knew Christ best was that He was perfect in every way and that He never sinned (1 Peter 2:22). Only by being sinless could He be the perfect innocent sacrifice for sin and take our place for us and as us. We must close the door to the enemy having any hold in our lives or *access* to rule over our characters. What the Apostle John taught about forgiveness is so important. He said: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Only the blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sin.

There is a fictional story of what the angel Gabriel might have asked Jesus when He ascended back to the Father's side: "Well, now that you are back in Heaven, who will continue your work on earth?" Jesus said, "While I was on earth, I gathered a group of people around me who believed in me and loved me. They will continue to spread the Gospel and carry on the work of the Church." Gabriel was perplexed. "You mean Peter, who denied you thrice and all the others who ran away when you were crucified? Do you mean telling us that you left them to continue your work? Hmm (Pause). What is plan B? And what will you do if this plan doesn't work?" Jesus said, "I have no other plan — it must work." Indeed, Jesus has no other plan than to depend on the efforts of his followers!

So that is the plan — it's a plan that depends on you and me working together with the Spirit's guidance and power — a project that depends on each of us using our talents and gifts and time and resources for the good of the Gospel. But often, we sit back and say, "Surely someone else will do it..." No, that is not what Christianity is. It is a call from God for each of us to live in obedience to the Holy Spirit and to bring glory to our God. There is no plan B — we are plan A.

Prayer: Father, we ask that You help us to be sensitive to Your voice. Draw close to us as we draw near to You. Help us to lay aside everything that grieves Your Spirit. We need You!

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