

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 16:5-33

Key Verse: 16:13a

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

This passage contains Jesus’ last words to his disciples before his arrest and trial. It is the end of Jesus’ upper room dialogue. Jesus teaches many important truths to his disciples, and wants to teach even more. Yet Jesus is restricted by their capacity to learn. So Jesus entrusts them to the Holy Spirit. Jesus explains the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the fullest explanation Jesus gives in the gospels. Today let’s learn the work of the Holy Spirit through Jesus’ words.

First, Jesus must leave so the Counselor can come (5-7).

Look at verse 5. “Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’” Jesus was going to the Father through his death and resurrection. The disciples should try to understand Jesus better and ask many questions. But they were not asking anything. Their lips were frozen, as were their hearts. They were filled with grief after hearing Jesus say that he was leaving them. They were somewhat like a little child who cries as his dad leaves in the morning. Jesus told them the truth that could give real hope in the time of grief.

Look at verse 7. “But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” Jesus said that he was going away for their good. Jesus meant that he would send the Holy Spirit to the disciples. For the Holy Spirit to come to them, Jesus must go away. Why is this so? We cannot explain dogmatically, because Jesus does not. In sending the Holy Spirit, God is absolutely sovereign. He works according to his own wisdom and purpose. With that in mind, we can say two things based on the Bible. In the first place, to send the Holy Spirit, Jesus had to ascend into heaven to ask God. To do that, Jesus had to finish his mission as the Lamb of God, dying for the sin of the world. God had taught that forgiveness of sins is obtained through a blood sacrifice (Lev 17:11; Heb 9:22). Only then could the holy God truly reconcile with sinful men. Jesus’ perfect sacrifice satisfied God’s justice. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, it was a universal outpouring of God’s blessing on people (Ac 2:17). Whoever repents and believes in Jesus can receive the Holy Spirit (Ac 2:38-39).

In the second place, Jesus wanted his disciples to learn independent faith in the work of the Holy Spirit. As long as Jesus was with them, the disciples looked to the Incarnate Jesus for wisdom and guidance and all necessary things—even for lunch. They expected Jesus to give them direction. They sought Jesus’ approval and correction constantly. So they did not pray. They did not take responsibility for world salvation. They were like a youngest son who finds he has a wife and two kids. He can no longer live according to his impulses, but must bear a real responsibility. This turns him into a man—a father and a husband. Jesus had taken care of his disciples for three years. Then suddenly he left them. Human shepherds may be necessary. However, disciples of Jesus must mature until they can depend on the work of the Holy Spirit.

In the last three years God has enabled us to pioneer new campuses. Well-trained leaders such as Dr. Henry Park, Missionaries David Kim and Paul Choi, Pastor Abraham Lincoln, and Dr. Harvey Siy have become independent chapter directors. When they left, we missed them very much. However, it is God’s opportunity for younger people to take responsibility and grow as leaders, depending on the work of the Holy Spirit. Missionary Peter Kim took leadership of Paul Choi’s fellowship. Bearing the responsibility has matured him. He is learning how to pray. He is learning Jesus’ compassionate heart, creativity and initiative.

Second, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt (8-11).

Look at verse 8. “When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment....” The Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt. The word “convict” has a strong meaning. It is to pronounce a guilty verdict that is just and undeniable. One who has been convicted cannot but admit his guilt. He acknowledges that he did wrong based on the facts. He accepts responsibility, including due punishment. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt.

Why is this necessary? It is because men deny their guilt. Guilt is a real moral consequence in one's conscience that results from sin. Guilt should lead one to humble repentance before God. But instead of repenting, sinsick fallen men try to shift blame to others. This began in the Garden of Eden, when Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. It has continued to the present day. A good bit of psychology has to do with shifting blame and alleviating guilt. The Bible says that each person is a sinner before God and that his guilty conscience stems from his own sin. Yet people deny their guilt. They refuse to admit their own wrongdoing and commit the same sins again. One person is extremely self-righteous and an expert in analyzing the sins of others. Yet this person suffers terribly due to pride, refusing to really listen to anyone, even mature servants of God. We cannot imagine that such people will ever admit that they are wrong. That is why we must pray for the Holy Spirit's help in teaching the Bible. The Holy Spirit brings conviction of guilt, like a prosecutor and judge. Many have left Bible study still insisting on their self-righteousness. But the Holy Spirit goes with them, continuing to convict them. Often, they return with repentance.

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment. This "sin" is not believing in Jesus; it is the sin of unbelief. Some take unbelief lightly. They regard a terrorist as a worse sinner than an unbeliever. But unbelief is very serious, for it creates an atmosphere of rampant wickedness. Many seemingly moral people reject Jesus, unwilling to acknowledge his Lordship. They pretend to be intellectually honest and carefree. But the darkness of their unbelieving hearts fosters unmentionable evil. The Holy Spirit knows their inner condition and rebukes them constantly. In the end, the Bible says, "every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:10-11).

William Murray was the son of the infamous atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair. It was their case that the Supreme Court used to remove prayer from public schools in 1962. After 20 years of misery, William cried out to God and accepted Jesus as his Savior. What led him to do that? It was the constant work of the Holy Spirit to convict him of sin. After conversion, he wrote a book titled, "My Life Without God." He described his suffering in sin and the terrible evil in his mother. He began to pray for the salvation of his family. He made innumerable contact by phone and letter urging their repentance. How much more did the Holy Spirit urge them to repent! Ms. O'Hair was murdered tragically in 1999. Last week, the Religious Freedom Coalition, founded by William Murray, helped introduce a constitutional amendment that would restore prayer in public schools, encourage public posting of the Ten Commandments, and preserve the words "under God" in the pledge of allegiance. How great is the work of the Holy Spirit!

The Holy Spirit also convicts the world in regard to righteousness. This means that Jesus is right. Although the religious leaders tried to make Jesus look like a criminal and the Roman government agreed with them, the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Apostles, testified that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died for the sin of the world. The Holy Spirit's testimony overpowered the lies of the devil. Jesus is right and Jesus' way is right. These days we live in a very confused world which urges people to accept all religions as equal and not to insist that any of them are the only way. But Jesus said clearly, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6). Jesus is the right way to God and the only way to God. Let's proclaim this truth, trusting in the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit also convicts the world in regard to judgment. Look at verse 11. "...and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned." At the cross, God pronounced judgment against the devil. The only way the devil can stay in this world is by capturing the hearts of people through his crafty deceit. The lies of the devil include that sin will not end in death, and that God does not love mankind. Through the cross, God demonstrated his uncompromising hatred for sin. Through the cross, God demonstrated his absolute love for mankind. God demonstrated that his power is greater than the devil's, and his wisdom is matchless. God judged the devil with justice and finality. He will be cast into the fiery lake of burning sulfur for eternal punishment (Rev 20:10). All who stand with him will be condemned with him. The Holy Spirit convicts the world about judgment.

Third, he will guide you into all truth (12-15).

Look at verse 12. "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear." Jesus had so much more to say. But he realized his disciples' limit in bearing his teaching. This shows us that Jesus' disciples must be ever-growing. They had been with Jesus over three years. Jesus was the best, most diligent teacher. He taught them the word of God until their minds and hearts were cleansed (15:3). Still, they were only able to contain a portion of what Jesus wanted to teach them. They needed to grow more. There is always more to learn from Jesus. If disciples every stop

growing, they must repent. The Apostle Paul, after meeting the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus, devoted himself fully to the gospel. He grew to be a powerful witness of Christ throughout the Roman world. Yet, near the end of his life, he did not think he knew Christ enough. He wanted to grow in Christ all the more. He said in Philippians 3:10a, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection...." Someone said, "If you think you are green, you will grow. If you think you are ripe, you will rot."

We can also learn Jesus' patience as a Bible teacher. Jesus did not teach according to his teaching capacity. Jesus taught according to the disciples' learning capacity. When they could bear no more, he stopped. Considering the situation, this is remarkable. It was the last few hours that Jesus would be with them. And yet Jesus was patient. Patience is often overlooked. But it is a great virtue and one of the fruits of the Spirit. We must learn the patience of Jesus.

Jesus was patient for a reason. He trusted the Holy Spirit to take over his ministry. Look at verse 13a. "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth." The Holy Spirit ministers to the disciples differently than he does to the world. While he convicts the world, he guides the disciples. The Holy Spirit is our guide who dwells in our souls. This is a personal relationship like that of a parent and child, teacher and student, or coach and athlete. The word "guide" suggests a marvelous interaction in which real learning takes place. As the disciples were all different, the Holy Spirit would lead each one personally to practice God's truth through their life experiences. Jesus said the Spirit would guide them "into all truth." This means first of all, the truth about God. He would make God known to them in the fullness of his love, holiness, and all his attributes. Their lives would become an adventure; each experience an opportunity to know God more and grow in his image. When Jesus said, "all truth," I believe he includes the truth about man, the world, and all things. The Holy Spirit would give them spiritual insight and wisdom to see the world as it really is. They would be able to pray compassionately for all people and to serve any kind of person with the love of God. The Holy Spirit's guidance would make them good shepherds for the whole world.

Look at verse 13b. "He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." The Holy Spirit works interdependently with God the Father and Jesus the Son. He corroborates what they have said and explains the meaning more deeply until the disciples can grasp the fullness of the truth. The Holy Spirit uses the words Jesus spoke to communicate with the disciples. As we have seen, Jesus spoke only what the Father wanted him to speak (12:49). There is a marvelous unity in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit which centers around the word of God. The Holy Spirit speaks to the disciples through the word of God. This is important for us to know. The Holy Spirit's leading, personal and intimate though it may be, has a definite guideline. It is the word of God. From time to time, charlatans appear, saying, "The Holy Spirit said..." and present a fantastic idea designed to empty others' pockets. Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit does not speak on his own. He speaks according to the word of God. To discern the work of the Spirit we must know the Bible. When we follow the Holy Spirit as revealed through the Bible, he leads us into all truth.

Verse 13b ends, "...he will tell you what is yet to come." Of course, the Holy Spirit has all wisdom and insight and can tell everything about the future if he wants to. But in the context of this passage, his foretelling is about what Jesus will do. There was still much Jesus had to do to complete his messianic ministry. He had to die on the cross, rise again, and ascend into heaven. He would sit at God's right hand while the Father put all things under his feet. He will come again in power and glory to judge the living and the dead. There is such deep spiritual meaning in each of these events that no human mind can comprehend by reason alone. But the Holy Spirit would enlighten the disciples about the meaning of Jesus' ministry in its full scope.

Look at verses 14-15. "He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." The Holy Spirit's purpose and mission is to glorify Jesus. He helps the disciples to see with their hearts what they cannot see with their eyes (Eph 1:18). The ministry of the Holy Spirit can turn any experience into a precious opportunity to see Jesus' glory. Later in life, Apostle John was in exile on Patmos. But in the Lord's Day, he was in the Spirit (Rev 1:10). The Spirit gave him a revelation of Jesus Christ in his glory. John saw Jesus triumph over all the enemies of God and he saw the coming of the new heaven and the new earth.

Jesus had told his disciples that it was for their good that he was going away. This is true. By sending the Counselor, the Spirit of truth, to the disciples, Jesus was inviting them into a more intimate and fascinating discipleship than

they had experienced thus far. He was inviting them to see heaven open. He was inviting them to see the glory of God. We only thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Fourth, the disciples believe at last (16-31).

Jesus said to his disciples in verse 16, "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." Jesus was referring to his death and resurrection. But the disciples had no idea what he was talking about. Now, however, after hearing about the work of the Holy Spirit, they gained strength to begin asking questions, even among themselves. Jesus saw their heart's curiosity. He told them plainly in verse 20, "...you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy." Peter would weep bitterly after denying Jesus. All the disciples would grieve, thinking of the cross. But Jesus promised that their grief would turn to joy. Jesus compared it to having birth pains. I don't understand well, but I did witness my wife give birth to all of our five children. The pain just before birth was unbearable. She said it felt like her body would explode. But as soon as the baby came out, her expression turned to radiant joy and she said, "Praise God!" When Jesus leads us in the way of the cross and resurrection, we experience grief. We lose relationships and things that are precious to us. We are misunderstood and even hated. We struggle with our own failures and shortcomings. But Jesus promises that the times of grief will turn to joy. And when the joy comes, it is an everlasting joy that no one can take away; it leaves no memory of anguish.

Look at verses 23-24. "In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." Through Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples and all who believe in Jesus have a way to God. Now we can come to God directly through Jesus, as children coming to their father. Jesus came from God and went back to God to restore our relationship with God (28).

At last, the disciples understood (30). They believed Jesus came from God. Jesus was happy. But he also knew that they would run away from him. However, Jesus' confidence was in the Father God, who would be with him to the end. Jesus was sure that he had overcome the world (33). He encouraged his disciples to do the same.

Today we thought mainly about the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt. And the Holy Spirit guides his disciples into all truth. May the Holy Spirit be your guide.