

Reading: John 14v15-31

Theme: Christ and His own.

This passage is packed full of comfort and encouragement. Last time in it, we considered the 4th area of comfort and encouragement - the Holy Spirit's presence is promised even though the Lord Jesus would be absent. I pray we saw things to encourage us and to stir us up as we saw again how precious a gift the person and work of the Holy Spirit is. In the context of the Spirit's presence, we have a further area of encouragement and comfort:

5. Christ will come to His own. (v18-24)

These verses contain many precious truths, things that may seem strange to us, which may appear as sublime, mystical even and mysterious. Such truths are precious ones and so practical in many ways - as we are taken to the reality of what it more fully means to be a Christian - to have and know Christ as your own, to enjoy this relationship with Him and see these sublime truths have important practical out workings for people like us. In these verses there are depths to plumb, heights to scale. I wish you had a better tour guide who could fully explain and fully point out the wonders of the area we are in. As we look at these verses, I want to do so using 5 headings and the 1st heading is longer than the other 4 – actually making up the rest of this message!

A. The importance of the Spirit's work.

You may question and ask where the Spirit is mentioned here in these verses. Nowhere directly - so how can I use this heading? I'm using it because we are in a section that is clearly saturated by the work and person of the Holy Spirit. This is the wider context and setting of these verses - the Spirit being sent, the work He does (v16-17). We see pointers to this in these verses,

as only believers would see the Lord and not the world; the knowledge of the relationship of the Father and Son, also the Son and believers.

These verses breathe the outworking of God the Spirit in the life of every believer. I personally have no hesitation in drawing our attention to this work as the work of the Spirit. I want us to see of His work in the lives of those disciples and His work, His “ordinary” work in believers through the rest of history - also His ongoing work in believers today in our lives.

The Lord Jesus would send another Comforter, Counsellor - the Spirit of truth. Jesus was going away and they would feel abandoned, as having lost Him. Jesus consoles and encourages them that He would not leave them as “orphans” (NIV) - which is the best translation of that word - KJV says “comfortless”. In 13:33 Jesus called them little children, here He builds on that picture - orphans, who seem to have no one to care for them, to comfort them, to give them hope; they were in a helpless, hopeless and friendless state. He encourages, comforts them that this was not going to be their lot, that He, Himself would come to them by the person and work of the Spirit.

How then would He come to them? Yes, by His resurrection and they would rejoice He was alive, but then He would ascend to heaven and they would be separated again from His physical presence. That would be both an encouragement and also and a discouragement and grief to them. Would this give us, who are living so long after the event, any real comfort? Yes, it should! Jesus is alive, but we would have to struggle on without His presence until, usually, death unites us with Him. Some say it refers to the 2nd coming and the comfort that would bring. Yes, that is great comfort, but the disciples then and now would be

left alone, as orphans until then. Yet the promise is not for a future time only, as it literally reads *“I am coming; I come to you”* - indicating it is for here and now whatever time we Christians are living in.

When the Holy Spirit came in His fullness on the day of Pentecost, He came to make the things of Christ real, applicable, felt and realised by and to all believers – both then and now. God the Spirit would bring along with Him God the Son. The Spirit would reveal, glorify, teach of Christ, apply Christ’s work and merits to the lives of every believer and make His salvation and teaching effective in their lives. Christ comes to the believer in the presence, person and power of the Holy Spirit. Remember the Spirit is given as the continuing gift from the Father and Son. It is He who reveals the things of God, of Christ to us. Christ comes to believers as the Spirit comes to them.

We are to see the need for the supply of the Spirit, to walk according to the Spirit, not to grieve Him or quench His work and influence in us, as we then would act against our own souls’ best interest and grieve our Saviour.

We are not to be content with salvation alone - as great and marvellous as it is! Once we are saved, we realise how marvellous it is, but then there are mountain heights of knowledge and experiential knowledge - knowledge of personal experiences of Christ and His love - to ascend into and are able to gaze on the beauty of the view and to realise there is still more to press on to. Such things are brought to us by God the Spirit through the word of God.

By the work of the Holy Spirit alone believers will see Him (v19). As the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us, we see by the eye

of faith, our hearts and minds. This has already been our experience - we have read a passage many times before, sang a song and then suddenly, it is if a light switch has been switched on and we see things as we have never seen them before; or some aspect of the Lord Jesus becomes intensely real and personal. It happened in our salvation - things we had no interest in, things we gave lip service to before - which made no difference to our lives, but then they became alive to us, made sense, fitted into place. Was it a better preacher, a more alert mind? Not at all! It was the Holy Spirit opening our minds and hearts, making Christ known to us, showing our need of Jesus and we believed in Him.

By the work of the Holy Spirit, we recognise, even if we cannot understand it fully, the union between the Father and the Son (v20). How do we explain the Trinity - One Being and yet 3 persons; all equally God, but distinct? Theologians use grand terms and explanations, along with many complex reasonings and arguments. Yet a believer, as they come to faith in Jesus, realises, knows that Jesus is in the Father. There is this close relationship between Father and Son. It makes sense, it stands to reason! We didn't need to study deep theology, but it is known, impressed on our spiritual minds that this is so and yet we still need to press on to understand all we can.

Also, there is this realisation that by faith we are in Christ (v20) - in union with Him, in a relationship with Him. Here is something marvellous - we had become aware of our sin and, going before God, that we deserved His condemnation and punishment, but we realised, understood that we have been forgiven and are in right relationship with God; that we are "in Christ" and are safe, secure, clean, loved and accepted. In some of us, this expresses itself most vocally, others have silent

adoration, but such things are made known and applied by the Holy Spirit.

There is this spiritual union between us and our Saviour. It allows for growth and development within this relationship, but oh the sweetness of that time when we can say, know and feel *“I am His and He is mine.”* As we go on in the Christian life, we learn more of that relationship - He is the Vine, we are the branches; He is the Shepherd, we are the sheep; He is the head and we are of His body and are united to Him. These things are brought to our hearts and lives by the Holy Spirit applying the truth of God’s word.

This is true of the wonder we see at the end of v19 - because Jesus lives, we shall live also. We will see more of this next time. Yet it is the basis of the hope of every Christian - we have a living Saviour, risen from the dead, the conqueror over death and hell. Because He is our Saviour, His life secures our life. At times we may have this truth applied by the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives and it causes the truth to move us deeply and whether we sing it, saying it or just feel its truth – the chorus of a hymn can move us deeply - *“He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me in talks with me, along life’s narrow way. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart. You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.”*

We understand by the work of the Spirit that we have the love of both the Father and Son and these are brought home to us (v21), for by the Spirit’s work we know both the Father and Son making their home with us (v23). I find this incredible and thrilling, that creatures like you and me, who deserve only God’s punishment in hell and separation from Him, have God

the Holy Spirit coming to us, in us, with us, abiding in us and He brings the Father and the Son to us and us to Them.

This is mysterious, almost mystical, but what it says to me most clearly is that there is so much more to know and experience in the Christian life than what you and I now know or have ever known. There is more of heaven on earth to be known and enjoyed than most of us as Christians are aware of or dream of! As I've read of the experiences of believers of old, I feel that so often I'm paddling in the shallows of the Christian life and experience little of our Saviour's presence and love, yet personally I long for more. I pray you long for such too.

Why do we live as those who are orphans? I suspect the reason could be is that we seek only joy and peace, power, influence, but we are to seek the Lord Jesus, to know Him more, to love Him more and so to obey Him more. That is why it seems that we paddle about in our knowing the wonders of what these verses speak of. Pray for me, pray for one another that we would all know much more of the realities of what Jesus is saying here in these verses.

In heaven we will know, yet be ever knowing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in all their fullness dwelling with us and us with them. Yet there are sweet times to know Him now in our daily lives and these will be forerunners of the glory, joy and wonder of heaven.

What truths we have been able to look at this morning, but a further 4 points wait for next time from these verses. Before we close, let's pause and consider this 1st point from the viewpoint of our church and Christian lives.

The Lord Jesus has given the Holy Spirit to work in us His people, His church here. These things are ours and we are not being teased by the Lord Jesus about such things and then He pulls them away from us. These things are ours. Have we considered such, seen and realised what is ours as a right as God's children? We are able to know and enjoy such. Do we ever pray for such? Yes, we pray about many things - our needs, problems; we pray for others, but can I urge us not to keep paddling about in the shallows in prayer. Pray for such things in these verses to be known personally in our lives and in the lives of our brothers and sisters in the church here.

Such things cannot be prayed for in isolation and we need to go back to v15, as well as to consider v21, 23-24 - with their emphasis on loving obedience to our Saviour. We may want shortcuts, instant solutions - simply add prayer and suddenly all will be well and we will be super spiritual, knowing great things of and from God. Yet the way is loving obedience, is holiness, holy living, achieved by God the Spirit taking God's word and applying it to our lives, as He does so we seek His help to work and live it out - so prayer is needed, as is fellowship, teaching and the means of grace.

Anyone who offers instant cures or fixes for our Christian life, shortcuts, some new thing or mystical experience, needs to be checked out against and with the word of God. There is no one experience. It is an uphill walk with grand views and as one peak after the other come into view and yet seem to be steeper each time. We are to be constantly going on with Christ as God the Holy Spirit can and goes on doing His work of leading us, of us being constantly filled and refilled with the Spirit.

Consider Paul's prayers for the Ephesians - who were ordinary, bog standard, everyday believers in 1:17 to the end of that first chapter; or 3:16-19 *"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God."* Here in these verses in John 14 we are face-to-face with great things in the Christian life, as well as those verses in Ephesians!

The Lord Jesus is teaching this here and we should be grieved if we know so little of this as a reality in our own lives and in the life of the church, but we can be encouraged that such is not beyond us, but is ours as believers by the same Holy Spirit, His work in us and His presence with us as believers. Next time we will go on and look at the remaining 4 points I want us to see from v18-24.

My prayer and desire is that as we learn things from these verses, we together would know such realities in our lives and go on to live lives that would challenge this dark world as they would not be able to dismiss or explain away our lives and the sense of God coming through such lives lived for His glory.