

Reading: John 14v15-31

Theme: Taught to help us.

Here in John 14 we have seen 5 areas of encouragement and comfort for believers – **1st. Heaven is secure** (v2-3); **2nd. The way to heaven is certain and secure** (v4-11); **3rd. Christ’s work will not stop after His departure** (v12-14); **4th. The Spirit’s presence is promised** (v15-17); **5th. Christ will come back to His own** (v18-24) – we saw in the 5th that Jesus does so as the Spirit takes and applies Christ and His work the lives of believers. Now we are going to move on to the 6th area of comfort, which also is a precious area:

6. The Spirit will teach what is lacking in our understanding. (v25-26)

This area is an important area for us to know and remember, for we learn more of the work of the Spirit in the apostles, in all believers - including us here. These verses contain the 2nd of 5, what are termed, “Paraclete passages” in John 14 to 16 which concern the Holy Spirit and reveal more to us of His ‘ordinary’ or ‘normal’ ongoing but supernatural work in the lives of believers. I want us to see 3 things about the important truths in it.

1. The great representative sent.

Jesus, at the end of v24 had spoken of the words, the teaching He had told the disciples. Both He, and they were aware He was soon to depart from them and He says this again in v25. It seems as if His heart is stirred at the fact that He will be leaving them. They seem so weak, helpless, useless even. He knew their state, perhaps they felt something of it. He had so much to teach them, but they were so slow to learn and quick to forget! Yet His time was limited. He had been among them for a relatively short and temporary time. Here Jesus speaks of the great representative

who would be sent, the emissary from Him, the personal representative sent to them from the Father in Jesus' name.

The Paraclete - Comforter, Counsellor - the Spirit would be sent. We have already seen of Him in v16ff. Again, here the Holy Spirit is said to come from the Father - sent from Him in Jesus' name - to represent, to bring all that Christ would have brought to them and the Spirit would do so on Jesus' behalf. The Son came from the Father - in His name, to represent and glorify the Father. So, the Spirit would come in Jesus' name to represent and glorify the Lord Jesus - to point all to Jesus and teach of Him.

In reality, Jesus was with them on a temporary basis; but the Spirit would be with them for ever (v16). In v25-26 there is this distinction of Jesus' teaching while temporarily with them, but contrasted with the Spirit, who when He came, would permanently come to them as Christ's emissary, then there would be continuing consequences, out workings from Him being with them.

In a sense we can say Jesus' work to teach and enlighten the disciples was 'incomplete' - their knowledge and understanding, of necessity at that point of time, was falling short of the meaning of His life, death, resurrection and ascension. When the Spirit came, He would bring about a completeness in their understanding (*as we will note more of later*). The Spirit came, was sent as Christ's personal representative from the Father - Jesus' emissary. We can speak of Him as the Spirit of Christ, who represents Christ aright in all His authority and power. Now we see:

2. The glorious character revealed.

The Holy Spirit sent is a real person and not an influence, power or force. The Greek word for Spirit is “πνευμα” which is a neuter noun - no gender assigned to it, but the terminology of describing the work of the Spirit here, always uses the masculine pronoun. The KJV helpfully picks this up “*he will teach you...*” NIV leaves out the word “he”, which it is intimated in the original. Jesus is speaking of a real person, the 3rd person of the triune Godhead. He is God the Spirit - as fully God as the Father and the Son and in the economy of the plan of salvation He has His own work.

A further aspect of His character revealed is that He is the **Holy** Spirit. In v17 He is called the Spirit of truth - He cannot lie, or cause lies, or deceitful practice. As such He is true to the character of God completely and He is the Holy Spirit. No error, no sin, no deception is in Him and His ways. He is the Spirit of true holiness. This means that only those who are made holy through faith in the Lord Jesus can be the place where He abides, dwells, lives. That is why there is a clear demarcation between the world, even in its morality, and a believer. The world is still in its sin and deadness. The Holy Spirit can only be with those who are born anew from on high, who have eternal life are those who are made fit temples by the work of the Holy Spirit Himself.

Some people make professions of faith and we can rejoice at that, but if we do not see them conforming to the ways of God in Christ over time, then we have every right to question their conversion. There are signs of conversion to watch out for, also to bring to our own lives as tests, but one clear sign is the work of the Holy Spirit making a believer desire to be more like Jesus.

I'm not saying that we expect people to become a mature believer overnight; we are certainly not to judge people by our own present knowledge and experience; nor are we to judge a child or a teenager who professes conversion as we would an adult - as they still have to grow physically, emotionally and in their faith. Yet we can expect all to have a developing sensitivity to sin and a desire for holiness - doing that which would please our and their Saviour, to have loving obedience to His word and have a desire for the word of God to be growing, known by and shown through their lives.

Our growth and development in holiness is part of the Holy Spirit's ordinary work - making us more holy and like Christ. We call it sanctification and it grows out of our salvation. It is an ongoing process in our lives and will be fully finished at the moment of our death. Until then the Holy Spirit will be ever continuing and helping us in this ongoing process. Very often we can be unaware of it going on; other times it will hurt as He seems to rip open and expose the dark recesses of our thoughts, hearts, minds, lives and desires - we feel we are shown how unholy we are. Yet if He wounds us in this way, it is out of love, and He will then point us to Christ for healing and restoration of soul. The devil will accuse us, keep us down and grovelling. The Holy Spirit may bring low, but He will point us to Christ who has for us become our righteousness, holiness and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

We are to question our own hearts and lives - do we know the working of the Holy Spirit in our life - inclining us to holiness and obedience? Or are we quenching Him and His work? Or maybe we are merely religious and moral? We need His work in us - as an evidence to our own hearts that we are born-again

of God's Spirit and are slowly but surely becoming more like Jesus.

3. The glorious work.

The Holy Spirit is sent as Christ's emissary, He would complete Christ's work of teaching them. He would teach the disciples all things necessary and bring to remembrance, remind them of everything Jesus had said to them. This encouragement and comfort has particular reference to those there with Jesus in that upper room; but it does not exclude subsequent believers and that includes you and me, but there is a contrast between the Spirit's work in the apostles and in post-apostolic believers. To put it simply we would have to say that for the apostles there would be instruction by **illumination and revelation** (new revelation) and for us it is instruction by illumination - the illumination of God's completed revelation i.e. His word, the Bible.

The apostles lived on the edge of, the cusp of OT and NT eras. The glorious light of OT revelation was to find its fulfilment in Christ, but the apostles saw and understood so little of it. The Holy Spirit would take that OT revelation and illuminate their hearts and minds. In the book of Acts we see they preach Jesus from the OT and saw things previously unrecognised by them. John says this in his gospel e.g. 12:16 *“At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.”*

The Holy Spirit taught them from OT revelation, but He went further as He also brought things back to their memories. One of the Spirit's principal tasks after Jesus' glorification was to remind them, bring back to their memories the teaching of Jesus

and its significance in the post resurrection and ascension era. These men needed the work of the Spirit in their gospel preaching and the gospel accounts – which are not merely the works of men’s minds, but the Holy Spirit was involved, bringing the things of Christ back to the remembrance so clearly and accurately, as well as inspiring the writers in what they wrote using their own styles and personalities. This work of the Holy Spirit gives us confidence in God’s word - divinely enabled memories, accurate, true and recorded for us. An example of this is the section of John we are looking at in chapters 13-17 all brought back to John’s memory and understanding by the work and the person of the Holy Spirit.

In the Spirit doing this, so new revelation was recorded for succeeding generations - great truths developed and written down. The divine authority of NT is founded on the work of the Spirit as described in v26 - our faith is on God’s power and not on man’s fickle memories. This new revelation is a fulfilment of OT revelation and completing, filling out of the revelation Jesus Himself brought and then working it out and applying it in the epistles.

Since the completion of NT, we need no new revelation and should be wary, on our guard, of those who speak of new revelation. The Holy Spirit will not speak or lead in contradiction, disagreement to the Bible. Supposed revelations - to do with doctrine, behaviour, faith or life – which are not in harmony, in agreement with the word of God, then rest assured, it is not of God! This is one area of the outworking of the truths of this verse. God’s Spirit will only teach, lead and guide in accordance with God’s word. His work in our day is instruction by illumination of God’s word as we read and study it, as it is

preached and opened up. That is why as a church we are centred on God's word and its everlasting truth.

It is not a matter of intellect alone for we all need the Holy Spirit to help us to see, understand and apply God's word correctly in and to our lives. We all have our biases, our prejudices, through which we can filter the clear teaching of God's word to suit our own ends. We need God's Spirit to open our eyes to the clear teaching of God's word, to apply it correctly to our lives, before we apply it to other people's lives!

As a pastor and a preacher, I need your prayers for God's help to understand God's word aright, to apply it to my own life before I seek to present it to you week by week. I need to feed my soul before I try to feed your souls.

We are to be alert and beware of those would add to Scripture, or place tradition above such. We are to beware of those who would dismiss the Bible as out of date, or a waste of time or unreliable. Some claim they are exempt from such and such a Scripture and we are to watch out and beware of them also as they twist and pervert Scriptures to their own harm and to the harm of others.

In our own lives, we are to recognise and own the work of the Holy Spirit in our day according to the principles of this verse. It is He who brings to our mind the teaching and comforts of the Saviour through His word. He illuminates our minds and hearts as we read and hear His word. He enables us to store up such, so he can remind us of it at a time of need. It is an ongoing process. We need first of all to be asking for the help of the Holy Spirit to apply our hearts and minds so we have the word of God in place to be reminded of as we regularly read the Bible and

listen to God's word preached and not just do these things mindlessly and without thought. In Psalm 119v18 the psalmist asks, prays, as we can also do "*Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.*"

In this way the Holy Spirit will instruct us through the illumination of God's word and so function as the Comforter, the Encourager, the Teacher, the Saviour's Expositor and the apostles' Remembrancer.

It is the Holy Spirit who will guide us into all truth (16:13) and those ways will be in harmony with God's word and will. It is a false leading to say "*I felt peace*" about doing something which God's word clearly forbids when it leads us to compromise with error or sin. The Holy Spirit will lead in ways of holiness and truth. Holy ways are God's ways and are God pleasing ways.

There will be little of the peace of God mentioned in v27 truly known and enjoyed if we do not walk according to God's ways - as we would be going in a disobedient, negligent way and contrary to the Holy Spirit's instruction and illumination.

We are to be thankful we have such a gift from our Father and Saviour, sent to make up our lack of understanding as we use the means of grace He has provided such for our benefit and these being blessed to us by the Holy Spirit as we use them to learn more of and from our God and Saviour.