

Reading: John 16:5-16

Theme: The Holy Spirit's work in the Church.

The Lord Jesus spoke of the work and mission of the Holy Spirit in the world. He encouraged, reminded and taught the disciples that they would not be on their own to muddle through as best they could in the work. They would have the person and work of God Holy Spirit working as they taught and preached the good news. The Holy Spirit would bring about the changes in a hostile world and bring people to faith in Jesus through their ministry. The Holy Spirit would convict, convince the world of sin, righteousness and justice.

Jesus went on to teach the disciples of the work, the mission of the Holy Spirit within the Church, but I need to qualify that statement by saying that in these verses, we have teaching that applied **directly and primarily** to the apostles, only secondary to us, but will see more of this as we go on.

Some people feel all we need to do is to go out and evangelise, tell the gospel. While I would encourage, urge and long for that, there also needs to be the realisation and understanding that the church base, the home church, needs to be walking correctly with their God and each other, so showing that the same Holy Spirit is at work in and through them. The Lord Jesus here balances what He has said about the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, with the work of the Holy Spirit in the church. It is not either one or the other, but a balance, a blend of the 2 – the Spirit at work both in

the world and in the church. In v12-15 we will note 3 things, but only 2 of them this morning:

1. Completing the incomplete.

The Lord Jesus knew the state of the disciples even as He spoke to them. They had much to learn and know - He had already shared many things with them in the upper room and He is sensitive to their state and condition. He doesn't wade in and say "*This is the truth, have it whether you like it or lump it!*" He is gently wise towards them. He knew they could not bear, could not carry any more things. It would take just a few more minutes to round off His teaching, to answer some of their pressing questions in v17ff and He would be through - because in chapter 17 He addresses the Father and not them.

He had things to share, to tell them, but they could not bear them, so He would leave off saying more, but they would learn of those things later. This is what this section is about and focuses on - the completing of Jesus' incomplete revelation by and through the work and person of the Holy Spirit. The disciples would be taught, would have revealed by the Holy Spirit more than they could bear at the time of Jesus' speaking. Then, when redemption was accomplished, then it could be applied in its fullness by the Holy Spirit; then He would guide them into all truth, would take of Jesus and all He accomplished and would make it known.

We are to realise that Jesus is the focal point of divine, supernatural revelation. He is the pinnacle, the final self-

disclosure of God; He is the Word. All previous revelation, which we call OT, pointed on to Him and reaches its climax in Him. Yet that did not mean His followers, the apostles, knew every detail they needed to know. They still had much to understand and make sense of. The Holy Spirit would bring back to their minds various things, applying and opening out those things to them. The Holy Spirit will provide the extras, help them to make sense of things after Jesus' death, resurrection and exaltation.

There would be this filling out, this completing of the partial and incomplete knowledge they had. There would be the unpacking of the work and the person of Jesus, the Saviour - Hebrews 1:1ff takes that as understood, for the author knew of the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would lead them into and in all truth, He reminded them of things and enabled them to see its meaning and this is said and number of times in the Gospels - that they understood this after Jesus' resurrection.

The final revelation of God to mankind occurs in the Lord Jesus and by the Holy Spirit, the blanks they and we need-to-know have been filled in as He worked in the apostles, as they recorded facts, understood events, linked many Scriptures together - for they were actively and directly guided by the Holy Spirit. Understanding that, we see that we need to beware of those who claim some new divine, definitive revelation that is binding on the consciences of all Christians. Mormonism says we need the Bible plus the book of Mormon; the Moonies say we need the Bible plus the teaching of Rev Moon. Many today will say the Bible

plus their own opinions, their traditions, their experiences, their ideas. That is why we need to stand firm upon the completeness of Scripture as God's full and final revelation and it is sufficient for all areas of faith and life. If we do not, then we could easily be led astray to look for more, especially more seemingly sensational things that we would like to feel are from God.

The Lord Jesus was so sensitive to the apostles as He gave them only that they could bear at that time. Sometimes we are in need of that same sensitivity - we go on when we should wisely be quiet and listen. We need to trust God and leave things in His hands to apply the things we have said.

We all need to learn that the same Holy Spirit is at work in the Church today and even when we put things badly, inadequately, He can, in His sovereign power, still work in incredible ways. We are to strive to do our best, but He is not limited by our weakness or helped by our strength. This gives us every reason to work, witness and preach with a conscious dependency upon Him and His ministry. In our prayer times we are to call on Him to work, to do that which we would mess up, would fail and flounder at and cannot do. Yes, we still are to carry out our God appointed responsibilities; to be personally obedient to God's word and leave the responsibility for the extraordinary and supernatural in the Lord's hands as He works by His Spirit. Now we see:

2. The Divine Guide provided.

The Lord Jesus having spoken of the incomplete being completed, went on to speak of the One who would be their Guide to bring about this completion of knowledge and understanding concerning spiritual things, especially concerning Himself. This One provided is the Holy Spirit. Again, we need to remind ourselves the Holy Spirit is not an “it”, but a person - the 3rd person of the godhead. Jesus says in v13 onwards “*He will...*” The personal Being and nature of the Holy Spirit is emphasised.

He is called here “*the Spirit of truth*” - all He is, says and does will be in accord with the truth. He will not lie, or contradict Himself. As an outworking of His character, He will guide, lead into all truth. He is the Holy Spirit and coupled with that holiness is the truth. Here is the teacher, the guide who can be completely and utterly trusted. The apostles would not need to have any fears as He came to them, for He was the Spirit of truth.

The Lord Jesus goes on from the Holy Spirit’s qualities to speak of the authority of this teacher, guide. The Holy Spirit would not speak off His own back. He has been sent by the Father and the Son (*as we have seen previously*) and He has this double divine commission and authority upon Him. In these verses the Lord Jesus again emphasises this commission and underlines the authority the Holy Spirit has.

We learn from v13b that the Holy Spirit will not speak on His own, of Himself (AV). Yet the Holy Spirit does speak about Himself - else we would have nothing about Him in

Scripture, certainly not these 5 Paraclete passages in John. I've heard some preachers, probably as an overreaction to things being done or said, say that the Spirit never speaks of Himself. Yet the evidence of Scripture is that He does - both here, 1 Corinthians 12, 13 & 14, as well as in other parts of Scripture e.g. Acts and also in Ephesians. What Jesus is saying here and the Greek emphasises, is that the Holy Spirit does not speak on His own, independent from the Father and the Son. God the Holy Spirit never speaks off His own back, never out of line, never out of step with the Father and Son.

The Lord Jesus never spoke or acted on His own initiative, independent of God. He said and did exactly what Father gave Him to say and do. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son and He only speaks what He hears! There is this unity in this completion of the revelation. Jesus speaks of this more in v15. These are amazing words. Here the Lord Jesus owns that all that is the Father's was His and the Spirit will take of that divine and infinite fullness and make it known to the apostles.

Only the Holy Spirit of God can fully understand the things of God and only He could take these mysteries of salvation, redemption, its accomplishment, its application, its outworking and make these things known to puny, limited mortal men for them to teach, to proclaim and to instruct others; let alone to write them down so that the Church through the ages can learn, work out and have it applied by the same Spirit in their and our times.

The apostles would be shown things that would complete, fill in and develop their knowledge and understanding. Things would be brought to mind that Jesus said and did, also the significance of these things would be realised. Teaching would be revealed so that the Church could, in the midst of all the early problems, heresies, persecutions and difficulties, be established and the truth carry on from generation to generation, built on the foundation of the apostles (NT writings) and prophets (OT writings).

The One entrusted with this important work is the Holy Spirit and He brings and applies Christ accomplished work in all its richness and fullness. This in no way devalues Christ or the Father. The Holy Spirit will glorify Christ. This is in accord with the Father's desire that all honour the Son and yet the Son is concerned to glorify the Father. There is a sacredness about the Holy Spirit, so gentle, symbolised by a dove, that blasphemy against Him is a serious and solemn thing, even the unforgivable (Mark 3:29).

It is the Holy Spirit who will bestow on the Church, on repentant sinners in whom He has worked, all the benefits and blessings that were accomplished by Christ. The world around us may be busy rejecting Christ, but the Spirit will be glorifying Him in the Church - to the hearts and minds of those who are brought in faith by His working as God's people present the gospel to all near and far.

Time has gone, and will look our 3rd heading next time - **the work of the Divine Guide**. Realise that this divine,

authorised person - God the Holy Spirit, was given to the apostles and given in His fullness. Yet His work in them was distinct and there were things they knew, saw and heard as eyewitnesses of the Lord Jesus that we can never know. Yet all that we **need** was recorded by them – as the Holy Spirit moved on them and these essential truths for salvation, for faith and life, have come down to us in their writings.

I hope that next time, we will see more of the Spirit's work, especially the great work He did in the apostles in completing the revelation the Church needed and also see how He continues to apply and work out that revelation in our lives as He leads us on into all truth, still taking of the Father and the Son and making these things known, still glorifying the Lord Jesus, as He comes and reveals things, truth in line and in accordance with the word of God. Whether we realise it or not, we need His continuing work and ministry in our lives and in our church. May the Lord Himself help us at all times so that we can tell of our lovely Saviour, to bring and give Him all the glory.