

7. The Promised Holy Spirit

John 14:15-31

On Fire with the Holy Spirit

Jesus and the eleven disciples were reclining on couches around a low table in an upper room at the Last Supper. Judas had already left the room to complete his act of betrayal (Matthew 26:14-16). As Jesus continued to share His heart with the disciples, I imagine them sitting cross-legged, hanging on to every word as Christ spoke some of the most profound teachings the disciples had ever heard. Christ only had a short time left before the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and the Crucifixion. He had to prepare their hearts for the coming dark hours when it would seem to the disciples that all was lost, something that was very far from the truth. He carried on encouraging them with His next words:

¹⁵“If 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 will send “another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth (vv. 16-17). These 11 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 did not think much of them, thinking them uneducated like so many of us reading these words, but after they 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 disciples were chosen for the very fact that 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 as we stop to consider what an all-powerful God can do with ordinary men and women such as you and I. 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 would do a particular thing or that a particular thing will happen. This promise is given, not only to the disciples reclining around the table with Him but to all who believe and put their trust 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 a person is paid for working all week, does his boss give him 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 the gift. The gift of God is also spoken of 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 not only given to the eleven sat around the table, but to all who believe, including many in distant far-off lands, those who are also called to obey the gospel message. If the news of the gospel has come to you, and you sincerely believed and turned your life over to Christ, the moment you believed you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. Paul, the apostle, also writes 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).

The Paraklētōs

In the passage we are studying today, the One the Father sends is called the *Paraklētōs* in the original Greek language. This word describes the Holy Spirit and translates 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 first 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 was someone who enabled some dispirited creature to be brave. Nowadays *comfort* has to do almost solely with sorrow; a comforter is someone who 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. He takes away our inadequacies and enables us to cope with life. The Holy Spirit substitutes a defeated life for victorious living.¹

What things were different for you after you came to Christ, and the Holy Spirit took residence? Does those two words, *promise* and *gift*, of the Holy Spirit change your thoughts about the Holy Spirit?

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

The Greek word *paraklētos* is found in the Bible only five times, and just in the New Testament. 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 a person to speak up for them when he or she was 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 making Him scary to our kids. The Holy Spirit is a person and fully God. He is the One who gives us help in every situation, every trial. He will provide strength when we are weary (2 Corinthians 12:9), insight when we are counseling someone, and 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 will speak through us when we appear before a judge for being a Christian (Luke 12:11-10).

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 he knew Jesus. But after the Spirit came, there was courage, boldness, and bravery 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 calls 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).

Up to that day, the Holy Spirit had been with them, but Jesus now told the eleven that when He came, He shall be in them. 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:

- 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 talking about the time He sent them out in ministry, and He had given 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 was a result of the Spirit being *with* them, but as yet He was not *indwelling* them. The Spirit could only come and live in them as a result of their hearts being 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* comes 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 personal belief about the Holy Spirit teaching us all things is that the Spirit will give us awareness within as to what is right and wrong. There is a “know-so” within the core of our being. Paul, the apostle, wrote that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16). There is an “amen,” that resounds within when a person hears the truth. A person may come to Christ like a little child with little knowledge as to 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 be meditating on the Word of God, and the 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 well as the Holy Spirit being our helper and guiding us into all truth, the Holy Spirit can give us a “Rhema” word of God. This kind of revelatory word is sometimes referred to as a “**word in season**” (Proverbs 15:23), or an apt word right on time when it is 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 or a revelatory picture, vision, or timely word. It can be a portion of Scripture that "speaks" to the heart of a believer, something highly relevant to a current situation in a believer's life; or it can be a clear revelatory thought to take a particular course of 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 intent of the writer, but the distinction of the two words is important 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 will breathe life into a passage from the Scriptures that will meet a need, or a particular leading of the Spirit to take a certain 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 need to be open to receive this type of encouragement and direction from the Holy Spirit, but always check any impressions whether personal or coming to you from another person or source, alongside the Word of God. 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. Those who have little experience of being led by the Spirit can be led astray as they look up to those who are older in the Lord. We should not be junior Holy Spirit to others. Paul, the apostles word 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 give it, if it will edify, encourage, or comfort them, and limit ourselves to those three.

Have you ever received such an impression, or sensed that God was speaking to you about a specific situation? Explain.

Obedience: The Key to His Presence

The Lord now talked about practicing the presence of the Holy Spirit. The precious presence of the Spirit rests on those who keep the Word of God and obeys Christ:

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.

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. 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).

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 never witnessed this myself, although I have seen pigeons land on someone, usually for food! When we 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 the place where all the pigeons gather! Four pigeons will sit on your arm and fight for a spot on your head, too! All the time I have been there, though, I have never heard of a dove resting on a person, either there or in the more than 32 countries I have visited. Even though doves are of the same genus as pigeons, they are behaviorally very different. Here 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 wrote this account?

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 upon the Christian for the rest of eternity. He will never leave us. But the presence of the Spirit on 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, will remain with 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 need to be quick to repent and forsake any sin if we want intimacy with Christ and have the Spirit remain on us. The Spirit descended and remained upon Jesus, which means that 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. Described by Matthew 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.²□

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 “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. In Paul's words, “**Do not put out the Spirit's fire**” (1Thessalonians 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 being obedient to the Lord are the keys to walking and keeping in step with the Spirit as we walk through this world. 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).

We must make an effort to not only know Christ's teaching but to also walk in obedience to what we learn. The Lord says that this is the proof that you are a Christian; that you obey what Jesus taught. He is looking for God lovers. Those who are in a love relationship with Jesus Christ are those who obey His teaching, not only when men's eyes are on you, but also when nobody's eyes are on you but God's alone. The more you are obedient to the Spirit at a heart level, the more of the Spirit's power will flow through you. To walk in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-18) is to live in such a way that you agree with the Holy Spirit in walking out our lives in Him. Like an army battalion marching, we need to keep close to one another and keep in step as we march in tune to the Spirit. When you get out of step with the Holy Spirit, be quick to repent and change your attitude and actions so that you can quickly get back in step with Him and walk in His ways. If you keep yourself in step with the Word of God and the Spirit of God, the presence of God will be with you and in you. The Spirit's presence will be apparent to those around you.

The Prince of this World

² R. T. Kendall, *The Sensitivity of the Spirit*, Published by Charisma House, Lake Mary, Florida. 2002. Page 26.

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).

Who is the Prince of this world? And what does Jesus mean by saying, “he has no hold over me?”

Every time we sin, we are opening 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 life. Do not give him *any access* to your life. 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 rest who ran away when you were crucified? Do you mean to tell us that you left them to carry on 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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