

LESSON #23 CHAPTER 14: 15-31***Jesus' Departure and the Holy Spirit's Arrival***

Divine Attribute: Faithfulness

Theological concept: Obedience

Geographical location: Upper Room, Jerusalem

Chapter Structure

14: 15-24 The First Promise of the Holy Spirit - The Indwelling Helper

14: 25-31 The Second Promise of the Holy Spirit - The Divine Interpreter

Spiritual Principles:

P1 Before Jesus returns, the Holy Spirit will never leave us

P2 The right way to express our love for Christ is to act in obedience out of the desire to manifest him.

Today's lesson...

"If you love me, you will obey what I command you." (14:15)

Love is an essential theme in the Gospel of John. It is used as a verb or noun a total of 56 times. In the bible, love manifests itself in action rather than speech, as faith and hope do. Hitherto, Jesus has spoken of his love for his disciples and their obligation to love one another. Now, for the first time in this gospel, he speaks about their love for him. He said that the evidence for loving Him is to give him unreserved obedience. Jesus reiterated this point four times in this not too long passage, i.e. v.15, 21, 23, 24.

From this perspective, verse 15 is an interpretation of the 2nd Command: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. As Christians, when we disobey God, our thoughts and feelings, speech and actions can demean the name of Jesus. Without the help of the Spirit of God, we cannot live the Christian life in total obedience. Thus, we must know who the Holy Spirit is, what He does and how He does it. That is why Jesus had much to say about the Holy Spirit in His departing messages. Though the Holy Spirit has been mentioned earlier, for example, the Spirit's descent 'like a dove' marked Jesus out as the one who would baptise with the Spirit, the spiritual birth by the Spirit in Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus...etc. However, the fullest teaching about the Spirit and his ministry is given in the following five passages in Jesus' upper-room discourses:

(i) 14:15-17 Helper (ii) 14:25 Interpreter, (iii) 15:26 Witness (iv) 16:4-11 Prosecutor (v) 16:12-15 Revealer.

We will be covering the first two in this lesson.

A. 14: 15-24 The First Promise of the Holy Spirit - the Indwelling Helper

The Promise of an Indwelling Helper

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

The word “Helper” is also translated as “Advocate” (NIV), “Counsellor” (RSV), “Comforter” (KJV) or “Paraclete” from the Greek word *paraklétos*. *Para* means ‘alongside’, *klétos* means ‘called in aid’. A paraclete is someone who is called to stand alongside as a helper or defender in court.

Jesus’ mention of ‘another’ Paraclete implies that they already have one; needless to say, he is Jesus. When John wrote in 1John 2:1 that “*we have a Paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*”, he is saying that even though Jesus sent the the Holy Spirit to be our Paraclete on earth, He is still our Paraclete in heaven! He has been with them on earth for only three and a half years, but the new Paraclete would be with them permanently as long as they live.

The new Paraclete is called the *Spirit of Truth*, and we will have a clearer understanding of what it involves later (16:12-15). His help will be available to the disciples to compensate them for losing Jesus’ visible presence. Hence, the world (the sum total of unbelievers) will have no part in Him. Nor can they recognise Him or appreciate Him.

But the disciples would know Him; though they have not received the Spirit yet, the Spirit already dwells with them through Jesus, for he is the spirit of Christ. The anointment of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism empowers him to exercise the divine power as he works miracles. With Jesus departing them, not only will the Holy Spirit continue to dwell with them, but he will dwell in them - individually and corporately! That means He is ever-present to us and He will never have to leave us until our Saviour returns!

P1 Before Jesus returns, the Holy Spirit will never leave us

Life application

King David cried out to God, “*take not your Holy Spirit from me*” (Ps 51:11) after he committed adultery with Bathsheba. We are thankful that in the New Testament, as long as we confess our sins, God will forgive us in Christ, and He will not take the Spirit away from us regardless of how grave our sin is. Do you realise how great God’s faithfulness is?

Jesus Promised to reappear to the disciples

18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

Orphans are bereft of their natural supporters, and they feel helpless, insecure and hopeless. Jesus knew that is how his disciples would feel when he was no longer with them in the form to which they had grown accustomed. Jesus assured them they need not feel this way because he would return to them - ‘*I will come to you*’ and ‘*you will see me*’.

What did Jesus mean by that? Is he referring to his resurrection appearance or his presence through the Holy Spirit? Well, his resurrection appearance, presence through the indwelling Spirit after ascension, and His glorious return on the last day (14:3) add up to his coming to us.

The world will see Jesus briefly during his trial and crucifixion, which will take place soon and last less than 24 hours, and not after that. Jesus will be visible only through faith alone after his resurrection. His disciples will continue seeing him if they “walk by faith, not by sight” (2Cor 5:7). Because He lives, we who are united to the living Lord will live. We continue to draw life from the ever-living Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The threefold coinherence of love

20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

In verses 20 and 21, Jesus speaks of his *unique oneness* with the Father, something they had so often heard him say. “That day” refers to the day when Jesus ascends to the Father and sends the Holy Spirit to be with His disciples (it took place on Pentecost (Acts 2)). Through their own experience, they will know that Jesus is in the Father. They will also know through the Holy Spirit that they are in Him and He in them. The Father who loves the Son loves those who love the Son, whose love is shown through their obedience. They will be admitted to the divine coinherence of love between the Father and the Son (and the Spirit). According to Augustine, the Paraclete is the bond of love that binds the Father and the Son and is the full expression of the love that flows between the Lover and the Beloved. Now, with the same Spirit indwelling them, the disciples are being introduced by him into the circle of divine love. Thus, not only are they enabled to reciprocate that love but also to manifest it to one another and to all mankind (Rom 5:5; Col 1:8).

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

The disciples were confused when Jesus said he would show himself to them privately, “I will love him and manifest myself to him” (v. 21). In his earlier discourse on the Mount of Olives, he stated that his impending coming would be public: “...then all the tribes of the earth will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). However, in this context where Jesus was teaching about loving one another as the trademark of his disciples, what he meant was that wherever obedience and love are present, truth, righteousness, and love will also be, and the presence of God and of Christ is realized. Not only this, but the Father and Son will make their home with each of their obedient children: “and we will come to him and make our home with him.” God’s life is active in us through our obedience. What a wonderful and unfathomable mystery our union with Christ is! Here, Jesus emphasized that keeping his words is evidence of our love for Him. He is saying: my love is visible. So you see, our love for our Saviour is more a matter of reason than feeling. Acting obediently out of the desire to manifest God is the only way to love God.

Do you love God? How confident is your answer? Though it may be challenging, it is practicable because the Father and the Son have jointly sent their Spirit as a gift to each of their children — we have an ever-present divine Helper!

P2 The only way to love Christ is to act in obedience out of the desire to manifest Him.

Life application

Do you want to love Christ? Then, set your will to please and honour Him and act in obedience to Christ. This is the only way for us sinners to love Christ. People will see a glorious and magnified God in your obedience and love when you do that!

B. 14: 25–31 The Second Promise of the Holy Spirit - Interpreter

The Promise of a Timely Interpreter

“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” John 14:25-26

In case you wonder who sent the Holy Spirit, the Son or the Father? Well, “the Father will send in my name” is another way of saying that the Father will send him in response to Jesus’ request.

It is repeatedly indicated in the gospel books that the disciples failed to understand much that Jesus said and did during his earthly ministry (for example, 2:22; 12:16). Now they are told not to worry, for when the Paraclete comes, He will enable them to, not just recall but also understand what Jesus taught and said. The Holy Spirit is a remembrancer, interpreter or illuminator to all who belong to Christ.

The Holy Spirit helped Stephen become an outstanding apologist. Acts 6:10 states that Stephen spoke with wisdom from the Holy Spirit, and the Jews “could not stand against him.” In Acts 16:14, it is said that the Lord “opened the heart” of Lydia to respond to Paul’s message, which was done through the Holy Spirit. Even Paul told the Corinthian Christians that he was taught by the Spirit to explain spiritual truths to them (1 Cor 2:13). The Paraclete is key to fulfilling the Lord’s promises of “seek and you will find” in Matthew 7:7, as well as “But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him” (1 John 2:27). Therefore, keep yourself in the love of Christ and have confidence that you will know what God says to you through the Bible.

Life application

Do you have experiences of being taught, guided or enlightened by the Holy Spirit? Let us not think that the enlightenment we received in preparing Sunday School lessons or Bible Study notes or sermons is by our own intellectual or spiritual cognitive. Without the Holy Spirit interpreting the Bible to us, we are as foolish and blind as the rest of the world.

What loving patience of God! Let us also be patient in following Him!

Jesus Gives Us His Peace

27 “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

Then Jesus talked about peace. The promise of the Paraclete failed to relieve the disciples' anxiety as they contemplated his departure. The Lord also foresaw their fear, loss and desperation when his arrest and death take place. So, He will leave his peace with them. His peace is not external, such as exemption from conflict and trials. Jesus himself was troubled by the impending crucifixion. Jesus' peace is more profound and lasting, wrapping us from without and filling us from within. It banishes anxiety and fear and gives rise to calmness and confidence as we trust in God's ultimate good purposes. Indeed, the world could only wish for peace; but God gives peace.

29 You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

Jesus had to return to the Father "for the Father is greater than I" refers not to essence but to authority: "the one who is sent is not greater than the one who sent him" 13:16 Thus, Jesus must render an account of his commission to the Father. Jesus is confident of completing his incarnation mission according to the Father's will - the way of the cross. His full obedience means the great saving plan of the Father will be accomplished! Honouring the Father brings great joy to Jesus because he loves the Father.

Life application

Jesus shows us that sharing joy and bearing burdens is how to love someone. Can you think of something that you rejoice with the Lord Jesus?

*29" And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.
30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me,
31 but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.
Rise, let us go from here.*

As they spoke, Satan's final attack was looming. But Jesus was confident that there was nothing Satan could grasp to divert Him from the will of the Father to avoid its doom. Neither the betrayal of Judas, the abandonment of the disciples, the agony of death, nor the separation from the Father on the cross will hold Jesus back from his Calvary mission, for our Lord has committed himself to the Father's good pleasure, regardless of the cost.

Life application

The way to live our life as a pilgrim is to always seek the Lord's pleasure, for whatever it might cost us is worth it and can never be compared with the cost the Lord spent on each of us — his crimson blood flowing from the Calvary hill!

Closing

Through the indwelling of His Spirit, our Saviour Lord is closer to us than to the disciples when he was walking on earth. The Holy Spirit is not an empowering force or an enlightening light. He is not an object, He is the third Person in the Triune God. He is God. God Holy Spirit is our best Acquaintance when we need a crying shoulder, a trustworthy Guide when we are lost, an invincible Advocate to defend us from Satan's fiery accusations, and God's love binds us to the divine union and to the saints' communion! How good and precious is the Holy Spirit. Let us actively commune with Him - through the Bible of course, the breath of God inspired by the Holy Spirit!

