

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Studies in John's Gospel: Jesus' Farewell Words - John 14:15-31

If we had been with the disciples in the upper room with the Lord Jesus when He told them that He was going away, I am quite sure that, like them, we would have been terribly upset. For three years He had been their guide, teacher and helper in every way. They had learned to love Him, even though often they did not understand His words. They had seen His wonderful acts of kindness and love, and now He was going to leave them.

His words in 16:7, "It is expedient for you that I go away", we, too, could not have understood. In the verses that we are going to read in chapter 14, the Lord Jesus begins to explain to them, how that a living Christ in glory as a Man, and the Holy Spirit sent down to be in everyone of them, was a far greater blessing than His actual bodily presence on earth with them. Let us read verses 15 to 18. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you".

In this chapter the Comforter is sent by the Father, whereas in chapter 15, the Lord Jesus sends Him. Here the thought is to assure us of the supreme place of blessing that is ours before the very presence of God, to know Him as Father. Also to assure our hearts, by the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, that Jesus is alive in heaven.

Firstly, the Lord Jesus presumes that they were real in their love for Him. This would be confirmed by their keeping His commandments. Scripture is always practical. It is not sufficient just to say things; we have to show in our lives that what we profess is real. It is from this basis that the Lord Jesus speaks of, "another Comforter". This word literally means "One who stands alongside to help". Of course, the Lord Jesus had been that when He was with them, but they would not lose anything by His going back to heaven. Rather, they would gain another Comforter, who would not only be with them but in them, something that the Lord Jesus as a man could never be. So the believer today has the Lord Jesus in heaven as the "Advocate", 1 John 2:1, (this is the same word in the original) and the Holy Spirit on earth as the Comforter. So we begin to understand how the disciples would gain by His going away.

The Comforter is also the Spirit of truth. The Lord Jesus had said to them in 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life". That is, the truth was seen in Jesus as an object of faith for us. He is the way into life and He also is the truth concerning that life. But now the Comforter, as the Spirit of truth, was to be in the disciples. Not now the truth as an object of faith, but the truth being worked out practically in each one who believes. So we can read, in 2 John 2, the truth, "dwelleth in us". This could only be by the power of the Holy Spirit. The world does not share in this blessing; it knows nothing about it at all. The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit as it has not a divine nature as being born of God. Only the believer has this. Do we often wonder why people with whom we speak about heavenly things, do not understand, but rather think we are ridiculous. Sadly this is because they have not the Holy Spirit in them. The believer on the Lord Jesus, through faith in His work, has the Holy Spirit in Him.

All this was an assurance to the disciples that they were not going to be left "orphans". This is the real meaning of the word in verse 18. Rather, His presence would be real to them, in the power of the Holy Spirit. We could never have the comfort of the company of the Lord Jesus in our experiences of life here, apart from the Holy Spirit. We are completely dependent upon Him to realise and enjoy any blessing from God in our hearts. Without the Holy Spirit, we would have nothing at all; we would be orphans, alone in this world.

In verse 19, Jesus says, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also". It is not difficult to understand the first part of this statement. The last time the world saw the Lord Jesus, He was hanging on the cross. After He died, and loving hands took His body down and put it into the sepulchre, the world has never seen Him again. But His disciples saw Him, after He arose from the dead; they saw Him at least three times. But this verse also tells us that the life He had taken up again, but now in resurrection, they were going to have as well "because I live, ye shall live also". So another wonderful blessing comes out of this discourse. They were going to have a new sort of life in company with Him, a life that death will never be able to touch. He was going to break the power of death, and to come forth in triumph over it, so as to be able to give to His own a life that we shall share for ever with Him in heaven.

But it is not just a life which we shall have in the future, we have it now! Verse 20 says, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you". The day referred to here is the day when the Holy Spirit would come down and dwell with them and be in them. That actually happened on the day of Pentecost as recorded in the Acts. But this is true of every believer who has the Holy Spirit. We know that the Lord Jesus is one with His Father, even though He is now a man in heaven, and we are in Him. So we can share with Him that place of blessing in the presence of His Father, and also that He is in us, as a living reality in our lives. How can these things be? Only by the Holy Spirit. There is no mental intellectual capability in any man to take in and enjoy these things. They can only be known in the power of the Holy Spirit. Because every believer has the Holy Spirit, there is not a single blessing that we cannot enjoy, in spirit now, but soon actually in heaven. What a wonderful thing it is to have the Holy Spirit in us. This could never have been had the Lord Jesus remained on earth. He had to die to put away everything in us that was offensive to God, to rise again and go back to heaven as a man, and then to send down the Holy Spirit.

The next section of our chapter, from verses 21 to 23, contains the question that Judas asked and the way that the Lord Jesus answered him. Let us read the verses. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him". The disciples, being godly Jews, had great difficulty in understanding so many of the words of the Lord Jesus, because they had in their minds the public appearing of the Messiah. This will take place in a coming day. But the Lord Jesus is speaking about the day when the Holy Spirit will be on earth and will introduce a spiritual life, a life which has nothing to do with our natural senses, such as seeing and hearing. So Judas could not understand how the Lord Jesus would manifest Himself to them and not to the world. The explanation opens out to us the new life that the believer has, so that we can enjoy even now the reality of the presence of the Lord Jesus, and the presence of the Father. However, once more we are confronted with a very practical matter. This blessing may not be enjoyed by every believer. If we are not walking according to the Lord's word, and keeping His commandments and sayings, do you really think that we would enjoy His presence? Even in our natural life, if, for instance, our children are disobedient and do things that annoy us as parents, do you really think that they enjoy to the full the love of their parents? I do not think so. We have said before that obedience is the proof of love. If I am disobedient, then I have to be disciplined, and then I cannot enjoy the sweetness of communion with the Lord Jesus and the Father. But if we walk in love and obedience, then we are assured of the presence of God, Father, Son or Holy Spirit, in our lives. Can there be anything more blessed than this. Daily walking with His Father and knowing the intimacy that was His when a man in the world. He could lift up His eyes to heaven and say, "Father". If by faith I have received life from Him, yes, the very same life that He has in heaven, then I have all the privileges that He had when a man in this world. If only we realised better the wonderful potential we have in the power of the Holy Spirit! We do not know it well because we often are not keeping His word. The secret of a successful Christian life is OBEDIENCE.

Then we have another great truth. The Comforter would be the Teacher. The Lord Jesus when He was with them in flesh and blood had taught them many things. If we look carefully at verse 25, the Lord Jesus says, "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you". But in verse 26 we read, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you". Note the difference between "these things" and "all things". The Lord Jesus did not enlarge to His disciples the heavenly blessings that would flow out from Him as alive in heaven, the reason being that they could not take it in. They had not then received the Holy Spirit. But the Lord Jesus refers to that event, when the Father would send down the Holy Spirit in the Lord's name and then He would teach them all things. Not only so, but the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all the things that the Lord Jesus had told them. This is very easily seen, because in the writings of the apostles, whether we read Peter, John or Paul or any of the other epistles, we have brought out the truth of the Church as united to Christ, its Head in heaven; the truth of the family of God, none of which are contained in the Gospels in detail. And then the Holy Spirit would bring things to their remembrance. How else could the apostles have written the four Gospels. They did not rely on their memories. Indeed, we do not know if Luke ever saw the Lord Jesus. By the time John wrote his Gospel, he was probably about 90 years old and he records events that took place perhaps 60 years before. No, we believe the Gospels, and the epistles, were written by men who were taught and guided by the Holy Spirit. How essential it is for us to believe this today. Christianity is not a concept of clever, intelligent minds; most of the disciples were simple fishermen. The New Testament is written by the Holy Spirit; men simply wrote down what He taught them. Let us remind ourselves again; if the Lord Jesus had not gone back to heaven, the Holy Spirit would not have come, and we would never have had the New Testament at all.

Verse 27 speaks of yet a further blessing: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid". In departing, the Lord Jesus left peace with His disciples. This is the peace we have on account of His finished work on the cross. Romans 5 verse 1 says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". The world cannot give this peace: it doesn't know anything about it at all. The Lord Jesus completely and fully leaves us peace that can never be broken, because it is based on His death. Not only so, He says, "my peace I give unto you". This is not the same peace. When

He was here on earth, He walked in perfect obedience to the will of His Father. He lived in perfect communion with His Father and so He had a peculiar peace that no other person had. But He gives this to us. In the power of the Holy Spirit we can, "walk as He walked", and know the peace which He had in that pathway. At this point He repeats the words at the beginning the chapter, "Let not your heart be troubled". There is comfort, assurance and peace in His words.

Afterwards they were going to experience much trouble and persecution, but nothing could alter the truth that He spoke of. He adds further, "neither let it be afraid". There was no fear with the apostles in the book of the Acts. They were bold, even when persecuted by dreadful men. How many dear souls through the past 2000 years, have found the truth of these words. In appalling situations, their faith stood firm, they were not overcome by their trials and they were not afraid. We need to prove these things in our own lives today. Christianity is a living reality, because it is sustained by the Holy Spirit; in the hearts and lives of believers.

In verse 28, the Lord Jesus seems to impress upon His disciples that His departure from this world was imminent. "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father: for my Father is greater than I". For Him there was the joy of going back to His Father as a man, having accomplished all that His Father had given Him to do. This was filling His heart; but He wanted His disciples to share it as well. If they had understood a little of what He had been telling them about the Comforter, they would have realised that every blessing was to be dependent upon His going back to heaven. But He assures them that He was coming to them. This was true for these eleven men; they would see Him again in resurrection. But I think primarily this refers to the way that His presence would be known, not only to them, but to us also in the power of the Holy Spirit. The statement, "For my Father is greater than I", does not refer to His person, but the position He had taken in becoming a man to carry out the purpose of divine love.

Verse 29 says a great deal as to why He was telling them these things. "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe". At the time of His crucifixion, His disciples naturally were overwhelmed. If we think about Mary at the sepulchre, or the two going home to Emmaus, or Simon Peter, so sad about everything that had happened. Yet afterwards they were to remember the things He had said unto them, and this would bring about the assurance of true belief. In His love He would try to prepare them for what lay ahead. They were slow to take it in, as we often are, but when the Comforter had come, they remembered and understood in a wonderful way all that He had said to them in these chapters. "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me". Satan was about to take control, using all the powers of darkness, of the hearts of men. This was to find full expression in the dreadful things they were allowed to do to the Lord Jesus. What a picture the cross is of a world controlled by its prince, Satan himself. There is not a single good thing said about the world in these chapters. This is the reason; it is under the control of Satan and the cross proves it. We may not like this, but it is true. But Satan would find nothing in Him, because the Father found everything in Him. Unlike our forefather Adam, who, when tempted by Satan, responded to him, there was nothing in Christ. The Lord Jesus was absolute holiness and righteousness and Satan could find no point of attack. What a wonderful triumph!

*"By weakness and defeat,
He won the mead and crown,
Trod all our foes beneath His feet,
By being trodden down".*

What a wonderful Person the Lord Jesus is!

It seems that at this point they left the upper room, and began the walk to Gethsemane. The following chapters probably took place on that journey. But even this move was to express His love to His Father. "But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence". The Father, before the world was made, had planned a marvellous story, which involved the glory of His Son, that He should be supreme. He should have a bride to be beside Him forever. His own heart should rejoice over those whom love had destined to glory. The cross was a necessary part of this plan. So the Lord Jesus went out into that dark night to accomplish His Father's will. Amen.

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