

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 14:15-31

Key Verses: 14:15-16

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—”

Last week, we learned that Jesus is the only way to the kingdom of God. John 14:6 says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* Jesus is the only way, because he opened the way to heaven through his death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day.

In today’s passage, Jesus gives us the promise of the Holy Spirit. Who is this Holy Spirit? What can the Holy Spirit do for us? How can we receive the Holy Spirit? Let us open our hearts and hear the words of Christ!

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL BE WITH US FOREVER

Look at verses 15-17. *“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth...”* Jesus’ disciples were anxious and troubled because Jesus had told them that he was leaving. They had separation anxiety. Ever since they became his disciples, Jesus took care of them. He taught them the secrets of the kingdom of God; he showed them his compassionate heart toward sinners and his divine power by performing many miracles. He traveled with them everywhere he went. Now he told them that he was going away. What would they do without Jesus? They felt like they would be abandoned as orphans (18). How did Jesus help them?

Look at verse 16 again. *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever.”* Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit. But Jesus used another name for the Holy Spirit. He would ask God to send “another advocate to be with them forever.” Other Bible versions translates “advocate” as “Counselor” (HCSB) “Comforter” (KJV) or “Helper” (ESV). Until now, Jesus had been their advocate, their guidance counselor for three and a half years, teaching them what is right and what is wrong. Now Jesus promised them that he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them forever. They did not have to feel anxious. They did not have to suffer from separation anxiety, because Jesus would be with them. Jesus would be with them and guide them through the Spirit. In verse 18, Jesus told them, *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”* This promise is for us as well. When we accept Jesus as our Savior and commit our lives to him, he comes to us through the Holy Spirit to dwell in our souls. So we are not alone; we are not orphans. The Holy Spirit is with us to guide us through all the ups and downs in life.

At this point, let us think about who the Holy Spirit is. In verse 16, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “another advocate” or “another Counselor.” Why did Jesus say that God would send “**another**” Counselor? It is because Jesus is the Counselor. Up until now,

Jesus was with them as their Counselor. Jesus helped them. He comforted them. Now Jesus was going away. Physically, he wouldn't be with them any longer. But he would be with them in the Spirit. He would send another Counselor, the Holy Spirit. There are several things we need to know about the Holy Spirit.

First, the Holy Spirit is a person, just as God is a person and Jesus is a person. We are mistaken if we identify the Holy Spirit only with a strong wind or a fire. The Holy Spirit is not merely a vehicle through which God's power is manifested. The Holy Spirit is a person who can communicate with us and help us personally. As a counselor, the Holy Spirit guides us to live a life of faith in God. The Holy Spirit guides us to make a right decision in times of uncertainty. Just as we can talk to God in prayer, we can talk to the Holy Spirit. Just as we can hear Jesus' voice personally as we study his words, we can hear the Holy Spirit through the word of God. There are many men and women of God in history who communicated with the Holy Spirit.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, a great persecution broke out against the believers in Jerusalem. Stephen became the first martyr. All except the apostles were scattered through Judea and Samaria. Among them was Philip who went down to a city in Samaria to preach the gospel of Jesus. The response in the city was great (Ac 8:1-8). There was a great joy. Then the Holy Spirit told Philip to leave the successful ministry and go down to a desert road leading to Gaza. Humanly this did not make sense. Why abandon a fruitful ministry and go to a desert area? But Philip was a humble man. He listened to the Holy Spirit rather than his own logic. He obeyed the voice of the Holy Spirit. And the result? He met an important official from Ethiopia. They had a 1:1 Bible study on his chariot. The official was baptized and became a Christian. Historians believe that this was the reason why Ethiopia was the first Christian nation in Africa.

Second, the Holy Spirit dwells in each of us who believes in Jesus Christ. Jesus says in verse 17: "... 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." The world refers to those who do not accept Jesus. The world cannot accept the Holy Spirit. It neither sees the Holy Spirit nor knows him. But the Holy Spirit lives with everyone who accepts Jesus as his or her personal Savior. The Holy Spirit is in each of us. He lives in us. Jesus also says in verse 20: "*Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.*" The world cannot see Jesus, but we can see Jesus because the Holy Spirit dwells in us. The world does not acknowledge Jesus, but we acknowledge him as our Lord and Savior because the Holy Spirit convicts our hearts. Again, the Holy Spirit indwells in each of us. He is a gentle person. He does not force us to do anything. So if we want to follow his guidance, we must be sensitive to his gentle nudge. We should be humble. We should pray. Then the indwelling Spirit guides us through the word of God and also through conviction in our hearts to follow the ways of God. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer is different from the filling of the Spirit in a person by God for a specific task, but that is a topic for another day.

Third, the Holy Spirit is God. To be exact, the Holy Spirit is the third person in God. This truth about trinity is confusing to many people. A man sarcastically said, "If God is

the Father and Jesus is the Son, then who is God's wife?" Many people do not understand about the three persons in one God. It is not easy to understand this if we try to grasp it with our human logic. God is infinite. He is beyond our logic and imaginations. We must acknowledge the infinite wisdom and power of God as we approach him. Then God will surely help us to know him. Although the word "trinity" does not appear in the Bible, the references about the three persons in God are unmistakable. In Genesis 1, God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." (Ge 1:26). After his resurrection, Jesus gave the Great Commission, saying, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ..." (Mt 28:19) The Apostle Paul said in his benediction to the Corinthian believers, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2Co 13:14). We learn that God functions in his divinity in three ways: God the Father as the Sovereign Ruler; God the Son as the Savior of the world; and the Holy Spirit as the invisible God who dwells in the souls of those who love God and his Son Jesus Christ.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit teaches us the truth. As the Counselor, Comforter and Advocate, the Holy Spirit has many ways in helping and guiding us. He convicts us about our sin so that we may repent (16:8). He helps us to have a conviction about our salvation and hope of eternal life. Most of all, he guides us into all truth (16:13). In verse 17, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth." The Holy Spirit reveals the truth, that is, he reveals to us the truth about God and Jesus. Look at verse 26. "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." The Holy Spirit can help us to really understand the words of Christ. He can help us to know the heart of Christ. This is the reason why we should pray for the help of the Holy Spirit every time we study the Bible. When the Holy Spirit is our teacher, we can understand and obey Jesus' teaching from our hearts.

When we call on God, we are calling God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all at once. God is like a loving father, Jesus is like a loving mother, and the Holy Spirit is a gentle counselor. It is important for us to be sensitive to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our souls. When the Spirit dwells in us, we never feel alone.

II. "IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDS"

Look at verses 15-16 again. "If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever..." Who can receive the Holy Spirit? Jesus says that those who love him can receive the Holy Spirit. Those who reject Jesus and do not love him cannot receive the Holy Spirit. To reject Jesus is to reject the Holy Spirit.

Look at verse 15 again. Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commands." Jesus repeats this teaching two more times in this passage. He says in verse 21, "Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me." Once again, Jesus says in verse 23, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching." The message from Jesus is very clear. If we love Jesus, we will obey his words. Let us think about this more deeply. First,

love is the motivation in obeying Jesus. We love him and therefore we obey his words. Why do we love him? We love him because he first loved us (1Jn 4:19). We love Jesus because he gave his life on the cross in order to save us from eternal condemnation. Jesus paid the price of our sins so that we may be free from the bondage of sin and death. We love Jesus knowing that he loves us.

Then what does it mean to love Jesus? How can we love Jesus? We cannot love Jesus by simply reciting, "I love you, Jesus," no matter how many times we say it. We can love Jesus by doing what he tells us to do. Love and obedience go hand in hand. Our obedience is the evidence that we love Jesus. If we really love someone, we would be glad to do something that the person is pleased with. So it is important for us to study carefully the words of Christ and obey his teaching in our lives. What does Jesus want from us? What is the heart of God? What can we do to please our Lord Jesus?

You may find many answers to this question. But when you study the gospels carefully, there is one command of Jesus that stands out. All four gospels end with this command of Jesus. It is the Great Commission of Jesus. He told his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And this command is not just for pastors and missionaries. It is for everyone who follows Jesus--everyone who loves him. Clearly, taking care of God's sheep is one way for us to show our love for Jesus. There is a wonderful dialogue between Jesus and his disciple Peter about this in John 21:15-17: *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." Jesus raised up his disciples so they could take care of his sheep as he had done during his ministry on earth.*

Look at verses 21-22. *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." Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"* Judas' question revealed the disciples' frustration. They wanted Jesus to show himself to the world. They wanted him to stop talking about suffering and dying. What did Jesus say to them in response? Jesus said, *"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. Anyone 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"* (23-24). Jesus tells us that not everyone is open to his word, let alone loves him and obeys his teaching. Since the first century, the gospel has been preached to millions of people but not everyone is receptive to the message. Our Father will love and dwell with only those who obey Jesus' word.

Jesus promises us that if we love him and obey his teaching, he and the Father God will love and make their home with us. When the Holy Spirit dwells in a person, he

or she can be changed into a new person. Indeed, the disciples of Jesus were changed by the Holy Spirit. Peter had bragged about his human loyalty to Jesus when he said, "I will lay down my life for you!" But in his fear, he denied Jesus three times before a little girl. Then the rooster crowed. At this moment Peter remembered what Jesus had said, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me" (Lk 22:34). The Holy Spirit reminded him of what Jesus had said to him. Then Peter cried in repentance. And Peter became a new person, especially after he received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. He was no longer fearful. He encouraged his fellow Christians to participate in the remaining suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. He encouraged them to obey Jesus' world mission command. Finally, he was arrested and about to be crucified. But he was not fearful at all. According to tradition, he told the executioners, "Our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. I do not deserve to die as the way our Lord Jesus Christ did. Please crucify me upside down."

Look at verse 27. Jesus said to the troubled disciples, "*Peace 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.*" At the beginning of this chapter, Jesus told his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me" (1). This time, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." He promised them the peace of God. The peace that the world gives is relative and temporary. For example, several peace treaties were signed between Israel and Arab nations, but they still do not have peace. You may have peace in your family when things go well. This peace may disappear quickly if you lose your job or someone gets sick. But the peace of God is different. It is the peace we have in our hearts, knowing that our sins have been forgiven (Ro 5:1) and that Jesus has prepared a place for us in heaven. It is the peace in our hearts, knowing that Jesus is with us. Only Jesus can give us this peace.

Look at verses 28-29. "*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. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.*" Jesus reaffirms his promise that he would come back again. Jesus also gives a warning that before his glorious Second Coming, the prince of this world would come (30). "The prince of this world" refers to Satan. Jesus crushed Satan's head by dying on the cross for our sins and by rising from the dead. But Satan still has the arrogance to try to tempt and ensnare God's people. But we don't have to worry. As long as we love Jesus by obeying his words and allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, Satan has no power over us.

In today's passage, we learned that even though Jesus is not here physically, he is with us through the Holy Spirit, reminding us of his words and counseling us to follow the ways of God. When the Holy Spirit is with us, we can have the peace of God. May God help us to have an intimate fellowship with the Holy Spirit everyday! May God help us to love Jesus by obeying his words!