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John 14:16-31

The Promise, Presence, and Power of the Holy Spirit

From time to time, I'll wake up in the middle of the night to hear one of the kids scream out in fear and call my name, asking for help. It's a nerve wracking experience, every time. Normally, I can sleep through anything; just ask my wife. A newborn baby could be crying by my head, a train could be passing by, I could be in the middle of a crowded airport and sleep just fine. But when one of my kids cries out suddenly for me in the middle of the night, it wakes me right up and I immediately run in to check on them. Maybe you've done the same, as a parent; maybe you can remember waking up and crying for help in the night as a child.

And when Dad rushes into the room, to find his daughter scared from a bad dream, what does he do? He throws his arms around her and says, "It's ok, Daddy's here; everything is ok now, *I'm here with you.*" And so often, that's all it takes for a child to calm down and drift right back off to sleep. Why? It's because there is incredible comfort, help, and protection to be found in the presence of a parent. *Presence can be powerful.* It melts away fear and loneliness, it brings help and comfort in moments of weakness and darkness.

When we become Christians, we are united to Christ, the Son, and become children of God, our Father. That becomes true of us the second we become Christians, the second we believe! But sometimes that may feel abstract. After all, we can't see God. And we can't see Jesus physically, not right now anyways, because he's gone back into Heaven. And so we may feel spiritually alone sometimes, far from God, spiritually isolated and abandoned. But God has not abandoned us as orphans; He has not left us to wander the Christian life in this world are on our: He is with us, through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus gives us this very promise right here in the second half of John 14. In the last chapter, Jesus began His Farewell discourse: several chapters worth of teaching to His disciples the night right before He is crucified. He told them that He would be betrayed that very night and would be leaving them, to go where they could not follow. Peter objected, at the end of ch.13, boasting that he would follow Jesus even to death. But Jesus corrected him; Peter would do no such thing but would deny Jesus 3 times instead. Jesus was going to die and leave them. As we saw last week, He's leaving in order to secure their salvation, to go prepare a place in Heaven for His disciples, for all of us who repent and believe in Christ alone! But there are still lingering

questions, doubts, fears about being alone, without Jesus, in the meantime. And so Jesus promises them that He will not leave them alone; and He extends the same promise to us: He will not leave us alone either; He will be with us every step of the way; He pours out His own spirit to dwell with us forever. And then He goes on to give some of the clearest and deepest teaching we have on the Holy Spirit in the whole Bible. We'll see Jesus teach more on the Spirit in the next couple of chapters. But here, Jesus promises to be with His us through the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts, who *helps us, makes known to us* the promise of Christ and the Father, and gives us instruction, peace, and joy in our hearts.

I. The Holy Spirit dwells within believers forever as our spiritual Helper (vv.16-17)

Last week, as we looked at the first half of chapter 14, we saw that the only way to Heaven, the only way to eternal life with God is through *personal faith in Jesus Christ*, because Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We also saw that those who are saved, those who truly believe in and love Jesus, do the works of Christ and keep His commandments. We're saved by faith in Jesus, not works; but those who have faith *follow* Jesus, love Him, become more like Him. We saw that in vv.12-15. But how do we put these things together? If we are saved by faith in Jesus, not our own works and efforts, then why is it necessarily true that all true believers will live differently, love and obey Christ, and become more like Him? The answer is because Jesus promises to *change us*, to transform all who believe in Him, making us more like Him and empowering us to love and obey Him. In v.12, Jesus said all those who believe in Him do the works He does. In v.15, He says that if we truly *love Him* then we will obey Him. IN between, in vv.13-14, He says that the power to do so doesn't come from us, but fro God; if we pray and ask, then God promises to give us the help and power we need to be able to be more like Jesus - not perfectly, not instantly, but noticeably and progressively. And He does this through pouring out His Holy Spirit into our lives. God does this through the transformative, empowering presence of His Holy Spirit. And Jesus promises to give His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to every single Christian as our Helper, our Counselor, our Advocate.

We see this in vv.16-17: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 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 translated "Helper" here is incredibly difficult to translate. Some just transliterate the Greek Word as "paraklete" because there's not an exact English equivalent. Some translate it as

Comforter, like the KJV. Some, like the NIV, translate it as “advocate.” Most modern translations say “helper,” like the ESV, NKJV, and NASB. Still others use “encourager” or “counselor.” All of these words help flesh out the meaning behind this Greek word, which was often used in a legal sense, such as a legal counselor or advocate, a legal helper. I think the idea here is that just as Christ is our advocate and mediator in Heaven, interceding for us with the Father, so the Holy Spirit is our legal counselor from Heaven here with us on earth, our advocate, comforter, and helper in the sense of making the spiritual truths of the gospel a reality in our hearts and lives. He is, after all, the Spirit of Truth, the very spirit of Christ, come to dwell in us. As Christ prays for us, and as the Father answers our prayers to be able to do the works of Christ, both the Father and Son pour out the Holy Spirit into our hearts, empowering us to be more like Jesus, to do the works of Christ, to believe in Him all the more, to love Him more and obey Christ’s commandments. The Holy Spirit helps us become more Christlike, faithful, loving, and obedient; He sanctifies us. He helps us walk not by the flesh but *in Christ* - because He brings the presence and power of Christ inside of us.

And Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will be with us *forever*. He will never take His Spirit from us; this is a glorious promise of the New Covenant, different from the Old Covenant. In the Old Testament, we read of the Spirit leaving people, like when the Spirit left Saul. But the New Covenant is based solely on the works of Christ, which we receive by grace; when Christ claims us as His own and lavishes His grace upon us, He lavishes His Spirit upon us, to change our hearts, increase our faith, help us in our walk, and hold us fast. His love never lets us go; His Spirit holds us fast; He will never take His Spirit from us, but promises that the Spirit will dwell within us *forever*. This is a wonderful promise. But who is it given to? It is given to those who believe in and love Jesus; that is, to Christians. It is *not* given to the world. As v.17 says, “the world cannot receive” the Spirit, “because it neither sees Him or knows him.” The unbelieving world does not have the Spirit and cannot receive the Spirit. *Only Christians* can receive the Holy Spirit. And *every Christian* receives the Holy Spirit: all who believe in Christ and love Him receive the Spirit; every Christian necessarily believes in and loves Jesus because that’s what *makes us* Christians; and so every Christian receives the Spirit upon conversion; in fact, we can even go so far as to say that we have faith, that we believe in and love Jesus, *because* we receive the Holy Spirit, who comes into our hearts upon conversion to open our eyes, change our hearts, give us faith, give us new spiritual life, and connect us to Christ! The New Birth, the

regeneration of our soul, is the very beginning of the Christian life, and it's the very moment the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts, producing faith and love within us. This is why Jesus says, "You know Him, for he dwells in you and will be in you."

If you are a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in your heart; Christ has promised His Spirit will dwell with you forever; Christ has promised that His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will dwell with you to *help you* in your spiritual walk, in your faith, in your love for Christ, in your obedience and sanctification. This is why it is necessary that every Christian, everyone who truly believes in Jesus and loves Jesus, *necessarily* will walk by the Spirit, become more like Jesus, and strive to obey Jesus's commandments instead of the desires of sinful flesh. No Christian is perfect until Heaven; but every Christian is changed and transformed by the Holy Spirit within us. Jesus doesn't leave us alone, but puts His own Spirit inside us to dwell with us; and the Spirit doesn't leave us alone either; He doesn't leave us the way He found us, but He changes us, making us more like Christ. He changes our hearts and minds. He also makes the very presence of God known to us, which brings us to our second point...

II. The Holy Spirit makes God's presence known to us as we love & obey Jesus (18-24)

In verses 18-24, Jesus emphasizes to His disciples - both his original band of disciples, but also us, today - that He will not abandon us as orphans or leave us on our own in this world, but will be with us throughout this life. We read in vv.18-20: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."

Now there is considerable debate over what Jesus means when he says, "I will come to you." There's basically 3 options: 1. He's referring to the Second Coming; 2. He's referring to when he will visit them after the resurrection; or 3. He's referring to when He will come and dwell within them through the presence of the Holy Spirit. We can pretty safely and quickly rule out the Second Coming option; Jesus will certainly return bodily one day, but that's clearly not what he's talking about here; he says "yet a little while," meaning it would happen very soon; also, the whole world will see Jesus when He returns. So we can rule that one out. Many argue for the second view, that he's talking about the resurrection. After all, he says, "Because I live, you also will live." Clearly, there's at least *some* reference to the resurrection here; though Christ is going to die, He will not stay dead, but will rise again! Because Jesus lives, so we live in Him,

and shall live forever with Him in His Father's House, in heaven, where He has prepared a place for us as the Way, the Truth, and the Life for all who repent and believe in Him! Because of this, many commentators think when Jesus says he will come to them in a little while, he's talking about visiting them in His physical, bodily, resurrection. The logic goes like this: Jesus has asked the Father to send another Counsellor, the Spirit of Truth, to be with His disciples forever (vv.16-17). They should be encouraged: this paraclete lives with them and will be in them (v.17b). But one could imagine one of the disciples thinking, "That's good and all, but what about *you*?" Jesus addresses this by assuring them he will not leave them as orphans; He will come to them (v.18).¹

But I don't think that can be all that Jesus means here. Though Jesus does indeed visit them in the bodily resurrection, showing them that He is truly alive, He still leaves again after that, when He ascends up to Heaven, to continue preparing a place for us in His Father's House. And so the question still stands: what then? Are we abandoned, left alone, without Jesus? But no: the whole point Jesus is making is that he will *not* leave us as orphans, even once He ascends to the Father. He shall come to them - and to us! - through the presence of His Spirit. And He makes this explicitly clear in vv.21-24, where He explicitly fleshes out what He means by "I will come to you." In v.21, Jesus says, "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 other words, Jesus is saying, this promise is given to *everyone* who truly believes in and loves Jesus; to every Christian. As we saw last week, we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone, not works; but everyone who truly has faith, every Christian who truly believes in Jesus, necessarily *loves Jesus*, and if we truly believe and love Jesus, He changes our lives, and we necessarily yearn to obey Him and become more like Him. So Jesus is saying here that He's making this promise to come to, to be with, to reveal Himself and make Himself manifest and known to *every* Christian, to everyone who believes in, loves, and obeys Him!

But one of the disciples, good Judas, (not the one who betrayed him), immediately asks, "How?" We see this in v.22: "Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?'" Good Judas is making the connection between v.18 and v.21. Jesus is going to come to them, not leave them but make His presence known; and

¹ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, pp.501-502.

yet the world will not be able to see Him when He does. Why would that be the case? The world *would* be able to see Him in his physical, bodily resurrection. But we've already been told, in v.17, that the world *cannot* see or receive the Spirit. And that's exactly what Jesus means: He's going to come and make Himself known to His disciples by dwelling with and in them through the presence of the Holy Spirit. He makes this explicit in vv.23-24: "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. 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.'" Jesus *doesn't* respond by saying that He will appear to only them in His physical resurrection; instead, He says that both He "and the Father" will come and make their home with the one who loves Jesus and keeps His commands (v.23) The Father surely does not manifest Himself to the disciples through appearing physically! He makes Himself manifest through the presence of the Holy Spirit who illuminates the hearts of those who believe, as they love and obey Jesus, seeing God the Father and Son through the Spirit-illuminated eyes of faith all the more clearly.

Jesus certainly appears to them Himself, in the flesh, in His resurrected body. But in what sense will He "make a home with them" (along with the Father)? It is not in His physical resurrected bodily presence. He will ascend to the Father. Nor does He physically appear and manifest Himself *bodily* to every disciple who loves Him and obeys His commands (as is promised in v.23). So in what sense is this the case? Through the mediating presence of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity who proceeds from both the Father and the Son. As we saw last week, in the first half of ch.14, in vv.7-9, to know and see the Son is to know and see the Father. To hear Jesus speak is to hear the Father speak. In the same way,, to know and have the Spirit dwelling in you is to know and have the Son and Father dwelling in you. The Father sends the Son into the world, revealing Himself to us through the person of Christ. Both the Father *and* the Son send the Holy Spirit into our hearts, revealing the Triune Godhead to us, through the spiritual illumination of our hearts! The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from *both* the Father and the Son. When we receive the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we receive the presence of the full, Triune Godhead in our hearts. To have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside you is to have Jesus Himself *and* the Father dwelling inside you.

God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son dwell within us through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and make themselves known to us: namely, to those who love Jesus and obey

His commandments. This is a promise given to *all* who love and obey Jesus. All true Christians, all disciples of Christ, all believers, have the presence of God inside us - this is inseparable from the fact that all Christians believe, love, and obey Jesus. At the same time, I think we can rightly understand what Jesus is saying here to include the fact that it is *as* we love and obey Jesus that God makes His presence manifest - known and more fully experienced - to us.

It's like in Eph. 3, where Paul prays that Jesus would dwell in our hearts through faith, even though He is praying for believers who *already* have Christ dwelling in their hearts. He's praying that Jesus would dwell in them *even more*, taking up greater residence of our hearts, remodeling our lives and making it a more fitting home for Him. He's linking our own sanctification with being filled more fully with the presence of Christ in our hearts. I think we see Jesus doing a similar thing here. We have the Holy Spirit in our hearts upon conversion, upon faith - the second we become believers. He is our Helper - our Paraklete, Counselor, and Advocate - transforming and changing our hearts and giving us the grace we need to believe, love, and obey Jesus more and more. We saw this in our last point, in vv.16-17. At the same time, *as we love and obey Jesus more and more*, God manifests Himself to us all the more through His Holy Spirit. As we love and obey Jesus more, God makes His presence more fully known to us! As we experience more of God's love for us in the gospel of Christ, it increases our love for Him. And the more we love Jesus, the more we obey Him. And the more we love and obey Jesus, the more we experience His presence with us - which increases our love for Him, and so the cycle perpetuates. And all of this is fueled by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit at work within us.

So friend, Do you feel far from God? Do you wonder if God is really with you? Do you struggle to feel and know and experience the presence of God in your life? If so, it may be because you aren't a Christian; if you don't have the Spirit and presence of Christ inside you, you are not a believer, yet you can, if you will turn to Christ, believe in Him, and love Him.

But believers struggle with feeling far and distant from the presence of God sometimes, too. But it's not because God has abandoned us! God is still there; He never leaves us, He never takes His spirit from us; but sometimes we feel far because *we* are the ones who start drifting. Our faith wavers, our love grows cold, we stop obeying His commands, we give into temptation - and so we feel farther and farther from God. When our relationship with God grows cold, when we feel far from Him, when we feel like God has abandoned us or doesn't care, what

should we do? How can we experience God's presence with us all the more? *By loving and obeying Jesus all the more!* It may be that you feel spiritually dry and far from God because you've been pursuing and nurturing a certain sin in your life. Or that you've been putting off and neglecting a specific matter of obedience, something that you know God wants you to do - but you just don't want to do it. IF that's the case, you shouldn't be surprised that you're relationship with Him is suffering. That would be like a husband complaining about feeling unloved and disconnected from his wife while he's actively leaving the house as much as he can and avoiding her like the plague when he's home, because he knows she has a list of things she would like to ask him to do, and he doesn't want to do them. Draw near to God in repentance; look to the cross and remember the gospel of grace, believing His promise that He *does* forgive you. And then recommit to having an eager willingness to obey the Lord, *out of love*. Ask God to help you love Him and *want* to obey Him. Ask not only for His Spirit's *help* to do so, but also that the Spirit would make the presence of God all the more known to you as you do! Commit yourself to obeying God as a way to love Him, to worship, Him, to spend time with Him - and God will make Himself all the more known to you, as you do.

And His presence will have a powerful effect on us, as we see in our final point...

III. The Holy Spirit gives us instruction, peace, and joy in our hearts (vv.25-31)

In vv.25-26, Jesus once again tells the disciples that he is telling them now, while he is still with them, that after he leaves, the Helper, the Paraklete, the Holy Spirit, will come. And then He further fleshes out some specific ways that the Holy Spirit helps us, working in our lives. First, we see that the Holy Spirit gives us instruction in our hearts, both *teaching* us and *reminding* us of what Christ has said. We see this in v.26: "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." In one sense, we can see how this promise played out among the Apostles in Acts: as the Spirit came, He indeed not only reminded them what Jesus had said, so that they could even write it down as inspired and inerrant scripture, but also gave them greater clarity and understanding of Jesus's teachings after the resurrection. But in another sense, I don't think that's all Jesus means here. All throughout this section, Jesus has been making promises of the gift of the Holy Spirit for all believers: for all who believe in Him, love Him, and obey Him. And I think we see the same here. Before we become Christians, we can hear the gospel and the words of the Bible, and so much of it just bounces right off of us or passes through our ears

without really getting it or being moved by it. But then we're converted; we're born again, our hearts are changed by the Spirit, we repent and believe! It feels like we understand the gospel for the first time. And as we grow, the Spirit continues to illuminate our hearts and renew our minds, helping us to understand His Word more and more. So that we can read through the whole Bible, year after year, and still see things we've missed before as the Spirit gives us greater clarity and understanding. And we also experience the Spirit bringing Scripture to our remembrance, don't we? We'll be enduring temptation, trying to fight or maybe pray for help, and then a verse or story from Scripture pops into our heads and we grasp onto it like a lifeline. We might be having a conversation with a non-Christian who asks a hard question, and the Spirit brings the right words to mind; or we're speaking with a Christian going through a hard time and all of the sudden we think of biblical truths to share speak to their heart. This is the work of the Spirit in our lives. He is our Helper, our Paraklete. I said earlier, this can refer to a legal counselor or advocate. Just as Jesus intercede on our behalf in Heaven, so the Spirit intercede on Christ's behalf in our hearts, speaking truth to us, instructing, guiding and reminding us of biblical truth.

He does this not just in giving us knowledge, but also the power to truly comprehend, believe, and feel it. He gives us *joy* and *peace*, as Heaven's advocate in our heart, bringing the realities of Heaven and the presence of God to bear upon our lives, in the depths of our soul. We see this in vv.27-29: "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. 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. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe." Jesus tells them not to be afraid, but not because things aren't going to be bad; he's about to leave, about to die; in vv.30-31, they start to transition, telling them he's almost done talking and they're about to change locations, because Satan, "the ruler of this world is coming," referring to Judas Iscariot, the traitor who is possessed by the Devil, who is on his way to get him. Yet even so, he tells them not to be afraid, but to trust him, that He even gives them cause to have peace and rejoice! Why? Because it is better for us that Christ goes to the Father, to secure our salvation, and to send the Holy Spirit into our lives, who strengthens our faith and gives us true joy and peace.

To have the Holy Spirit inside of us is to have the very peace of Christ and joy of the Lord within us. This doesn't mean that we never battle against worry, anxiety, or sadness. But it

does mean that we are armed with the strongest possible weapons against such battles. We are not alone: we have the power of the presence of the Spirit of God, who instructs and teaches our hearts, who reminds us of the truth of Christ, His Word, and the gospel, and applies Christ's Words to our hearts to strengthen our faith and give us greater peace and joy in Him! So don't be afraid, brothers and sisters: God is with you, Christ is with you, the Holy Spirit dwells within your heart! Draw near to Him as He draws near to you. Rest in the joy and peace of His presence; trust in God's gracious, sovereign plans for your life; trust in the salvation He secures for you in Christ. He will not let you go; He shall hold you fast; He has poured out His own Spirit upon you to uphold and sustain you, to save and to sanctify you; trust in Him, and He shall make Himself known to you, more and more.

And one of the ways our triune God makes His presence known to us is through taking the Lord's Supper, also known as Communion. We read Jesus's words earlier, in vv.21-24, that both Jesus and the Father come and make their presence known to us, through the Spirit, as we love and obey Christ's Word. And the Lord's Supper is a tangible, visible picture of that reality. It's a visible picture of the Word of the gospel, that Christ's died for us on the cross, so that by His sacrificial death for our sins and resurrection, He has secured life and salvation for all who repent and believe in Him. We are to eat of this meal in faith, as an act of loving obedience unto Christ; and as we do so, the Spirit reminds us in our hearts that the Triune God is with us, and draws near to us; Christ manifests Himself to us spiritually, making His presence more and more real to us, as we behold Him through faith and love. So if you have faith in the gospel and love Christ - if you are a baptized believer in good standing with a gospel believing church - then we invite you to join us at the Table in just a moment, as we celebrate our communion with Christ by the presence of His Spirit.

But if that doesn't describe you, then we invite you instead to respond by repenting of your sins and turning to Christ in faith, that you, too, can receive the Spirit of Truth and live. And you can profess your faith and love by obeying the command to repent and be baptized, beginning your life as a Christian. If you have any questions about this, we would love to speak with you after the service. Until then, let's have a moment of silence as we prepare to come to the Table.