

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
(John 14:16-18)

¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; ¹⁷ *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. ¹⁸ I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Jesus has eaten his last supper on this earth. During supper, he took a towel and he got down on his knees and he washed the dirty feet of his disciples. And then he said,

If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

John 13:14

And then Jesus broke the bread and poured the wine and instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Table for his infant church. And he told them,

This do in remembrance of me.
Luke 22:19

And then came one of the saddest moments of the night when Jesus dipped the sop and gave it to his friend Judas, and Judas walked out on Jesus into the dark night of eternal death.

And then Jesus turned to the eleven and said, "I must go away." He said,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:1-3

And so, we see that it was necessary for Jesus to leave and to ascend into heaven to be with the Father. And we are comforted by the fact that one day he will personally return to resurrect the dead, to unite our souls to our bodies and to take us, body and soul, to that prepared place in the Father's house.

But what shall we do until then? How will those eleven disciples and how will the saints of all ages survive in this devilish world if Jesus has gone away and left us alone? Jesus told them,

Ye shall seek me.

John 13:33

That is, you will feel my absence. You will miss me. There will be a time of mourning while I am in the grave. There will be some tears shed. There will be some anxious moments. But I will make you a promise. And that promise is found in our text.

I will not leave you comfortless.

John 14:18

That word translated comfortless, literally means “orphaned.” Jesus was going to his rightful place in heaven, where he had redemptive work to do yet. But he was determined that he would not leave his disciples alone. And so, he said, “I will not leave you comfortless.

Now what Jesus was promising was that he would send the Holy Spirit to be their personal guide during his absence.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

John 14:16

Now this morning, we want to make some observations from our text concerning the Holy Spirit. And we will observe Him under three headings. First, we will consider the personality of the Holy Spirit; that is, He is a person, not just an influence. Secondly, from our text we will see the unity of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son in the work of salvation. Thirdly, we will see the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers.

The Personality of the Holy Spirit

It seems to me that we have very little trouble conceiving of God the Father as a person. We see the things that the Father does. He sees. He speaks. He acts. We see the Father’s work in creation. We see the Father’s work in redemption when he elected a people before the foundation of the world. (Ephesians 1:4) We see the Father interacting with people in the Old Testament and we rightfully conceive of Him as a person and not just a moral principle or an influence of some kind.

And we certainly can relate to the Son as a person because he made himself a man just like us. He is flesh and bones just like us. And as John says,

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you . . .

I John 1:1-3

So we clearly understand that Jesus Christ was a person. But when it comes to the third part of the Trinity, his operations are so mysterious and secret that we cannot easily get the idea that he is a person. He is like the wind. We see his effects, but we cannot see Him. But he is a person nevertheless. Look at our text.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever . . .

John 14:16

Let me quote Charles Spurgeon on the personhood of the Spirit.

“God the Holy Ghost is not an influence, an emanation, a stream of something flowing from the Father; but he is as much an actual person as either God the Son, or God the Father.”

C. H. Spurgeon

So, let's first consider proofs that the Holy Spirit is actually a person.

I. The Holy Spirit is a person because he has appeared to men.

Needless to say, if the Holy Spirit were just an influence or just a principle, he could not be seen by the eyes of man. If he were nothing more than an attribute of God, then he could not be perceived by the physical eyes. But the Holy Spirit has manifested himself on occasion and he has been seen by the eyes of men and this offers proof that he is more than a principle, he is a real person.

You might remember that when John baptized Jesus, John saw the Holy Spirit descending out of heaven in the form of a dove. And the dove lit upon Jesus and remained on him. (John 1:32) Now a moral principle doesn't come down out of heaven in physical form. Only a real person assumes a physical body which can be seen by men.

And then you remember that the Holy Spirit manifested himself again on the day of Pentecost when he appeared as cloven tongues like fire and he sat on each of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And the fact that the Holy Spirit made an appearance would suggest that he is more than a mere influence, he is a person.

II. The Holy Spirit is a person because he has characteristics of a person.

A. He has understanding.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all

things, yea, the deep things of God.

I Corinthians 2:9, 10

B. He has a will.

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

I Corinthians 12:11

So it is plain that the Spirit has a will. He gives gifts for the church and he does it according to his will. The Holy Spirit has a will of his own. Now the will of the Spirit is always in keeping with the will of the Father and the will of Christ, nevertheless, it is his will and therefore, he is a person.

C. He performs acts and deeds.

1. He had a hand in creation.

And the earth was without form, and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:2

2. He inspired the writing of Scripture.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

II Peter 1:21

The Scriptures are a literary masterpiece. The Scriptures can say more in five words than human writings can say in volumes. There is an eloquence in the Scriptures that is unmatched. There is a loftiness about this book that sets it apart from all others. And it is because the pens of holy men were born along by a brilliant writer. And that writer was the Holy Spirit.

When Moses picked up his pen to write the first five books of the Bible, it was the Holy Spirit that moved his heart and thus moved his pen. When David wrote the beautiful Psalms, it was the Holy Spirit moving him along. When Solomon penned the book of wisdom, it was ultimately the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. When the prophets foretold future events with pinpoint accuracy it was by the foreknowledge of the Holy Spirit. When Daniel foretold the various kingdoms of the world which would rise and fall before the coming of Christ, it was the Holy Spirit who pushed his pen across the page. Who showed these prophets things to come? Why, it was the Holy Spirit of God. And knowing this, who can argue that the Holy Spirit is not a person? Not only is he a person, he is a most brilliant person. He is an omniscient person. He knows the future just as he knows the past and he knows it all at once. The Holy Spirit is the greatest

writer of all time. His writings, through the pens of men, are the greatest writings this world has ever seen. And all of this proves that he is a person.

3. The Holy Spirit spoke to men.

In the book of Acts you find that the Holy Ghost said, “Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work.” (Acts 13:2) It was the Holy Spirit who told Paul not to preach the word in Asia. (Acts 16:6)

4. The Holy Spirit regenerates men.

We have learned in the book of John that it is the Holy Spirit that makes a soul come alive. Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again and that by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.
John 3:8

Is a dead man brought to life by a principle? (A principle or an attribute has not effect upon a dead man.) Or is a dead man brought to life by a powerful person? And we know that we are made alive by a person and according to Jesus that person is the Holy Spirit.

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ . . .
Ephesians 2:5

It is a person who imparted the seed of life into your soul when you were dead in trespasses and sins. It is a person who convinced you of your sin. It is a person who brought you to faith and repentance by his wondrous power. It is a person who fans the flame of your spiritual life and keeps it alive day by day. It is the wonderful and blessed person of the Holy Spirit who applies daily the redemptive work of Christ to your soul. It is the person of the Holy Spirit that is at work in your life sanctifying you and making a new creature out of you. What a person he is who can do such a work!

5. The Holy Spirit raised the body of Christ from the grave.

But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Romans 8:11

If you believe the Scriptures, does this not prove that the Holy Spirit is a person? He reached down into the grave and raised the body of Christ. What power is required to do such a thing? It is a power never before known on the face of the earth. It is the power of God himself. It was not a force of nature that raised Christ. It was a person. It

was the power of a person that overwhelmed and overturned the forces of nature and caused Christ to come out. It was the third person of that holy trinity that we call our God.

The Unity of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son

We have seen very often and very clearly in the Gospel of John that Jesus claimed to be one with the Father. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30) And we talked about how this means that Jesus and the Father were one in essence. There was no contradiction in their natures at all. Everything that the Father was the Son was. And therefore, because they had unity of essence, they had unity of function. The words and works of Jesus were the very words and works of the Father.

But I think our text for this morning will extend this divine unity to the third person of the trinity.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

John 14:16

Notice here that Jesus speaks on behalf of both the Father and the Holy Spirit. And he makes a promise to the disciples, binding not only himself to his word, but also binding the Father and the Spirit. Jesus says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."

Notice how each of the three persons do something toward our salvation. "I will pray," says the Son. "I will give," says the Father. "I will comfort," says the Holy Spirit.

If we could cast an eye into heaven for a moment, we would see Jesus standing there, before the throne of God, mediating on our behalf. In our text, Jesus said, "I will pray the Father." And this is what Jesus is doing for us day and night. If only we could see him, we would see him with arms outstretched to the Father. And he would be crying out to the Father and telling him of our grief and our sorrows and our distresses and our weaknesses and our needs. And as our advocate, he would be pleading our case to the Father.

And what does the Father do? On the basis of the sacrifice of his Son, seeing the nail prints in his hands and in his feet, the Father would listen to him on our behalf and would answer every petition of the Son and the Father would send relief. You see in our text it says, "and he shall give." This is the divine way of salvation. Our Savior, on our behalf, asks of the Father and the Father sends aid and assistance.

But what is the Holy Spirit doing in this whole matter? Why the Holy Spirit is bringing that assistance to us. The Holy Spirit is bringing the relief to us that was begged by Jesus and sent by the Father. The Holy Spirit is the one who applies

salvation to our souls. Jesus requests it of the Father, the Father sends it, and the Holy Spirit brings it and applies it.

So what I want you to see and understand here is that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are co-equal in all that they do. They are all working together to bring salvation to sinners. And they are so united in their work that when one works it can be said that the others work.

You will notice in our text that the Holy Spirit is equated to Christ.

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.
John 14:17

Now the one dwelling with them was Christ, at least temporarily. But John says, "he shall be in you." And look at verse 18.

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.
John 14:18

Just as the Father and Jesus are one, so Jesus and the Spirit are one. And so, we clearly see both the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit and the unity of the Holy Spirit with the Son and the Father.

III. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus was about to leave this world, he told his disciples that he would pray the Father and the Father would send another Comforter. And I would like for you to notice that it is the duty of the Comforter to abide with us forever. He is the best of friends. He is a constant companion. Wherever you go, he goes. That is why it says, "that he may abide with you forever."

We haven't even begun to talk about what the Comforter does for us. But what we know from our text is that he abides with us. What a glorious promise. The Holy Spirit of God will abide with us forever.

We may take a step in the wrong direction here and there. But one thing we know, the Holy Spirit will not allow us to step too far astray. He is a permanent chaperone to watch our way and to keep us safe.

And please note that the Holy Spirit will abide with us forever. There are those who teach that salvation can be gained and lost again. And I would like to hear those men explain the word forever! And here is how I explain it. Once God gives the Holy Spirit, it is forever! The very word abide is enough to suggest that the Holy Spirit remains with us and never leaves. But the word forever seals the promise.

We believe salvation is a work of God. It is not achieved by human effort and therefore cannot be lost by the weakness or failure of human effort. We are saved by a mighty work of God from beginning to end. We are his workmanship. (Ephesians 2:10) And God will not fail us. And he gives his Holy Spirit as a down payment on our salvation. (Ephesians 1:13, 14) It is earnest money, if you will. And Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would abide with us forever.

But let's not stop there. Some might think that the Holy Spirit abides with us but at a distance. You can live with people in the same neighborhood and never know them personally. Perhaps some conceive that the Holy Spirit stands afar off in a watchtower somewhere and gives us a glance ever so often. Not so, says Jesus,

. . . for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.
John 14:17

Now the subject of the indwelling of the Spirit is a subject so profound that we will never get to the bottom of it. He is not detectable by the senses. We can't see him or hear him or touch him. And so, how do we explain the indwelling of the Spirit? I prefer to limit our discussion to what Jesus revealed in our text.

First, he is not received by the world because the world only receives what it can see.

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not.
John 14:17

Remember what the Jews always told Jesus?

They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee?
John 6:30

And Jesus said, "The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit because it cannot see him. And so, I gather that the Holy Spirit is not perceptible by the senses. But true Christianity doesn't work by sight, does it? It works by believing the Word of God. And the work of the Holy Spirit is detected by those of faith.

Can we have personal knowledge of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Jesus seemed to teach that we could.

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him.
John 14:17

The indwelling of the Spirit makes such a drastic change in a man that he can hardly help but know that he has the Spirit within. There is such a sharp difference between a saved man and a lost man that one can hardly help but know. Whatever your

life was before, it is vastly different with the aid of the Spirit. What you loved before, you hate now. What you hated before, you love now. And you live with the constant knowledge that He abides with you and in you. And you know him.

In our text, the disciples had very little knowledge of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Spirit had not yet come to indwell them. But Jesus told them, "Ye know him." How is it that the disciples knew the Spirit when he was not even come to them yet? And the answer is that if they knew Christ, they knew the Spirit.

The Spirit is one in essence with Christ. And if you know Christ at all, then you know the Spirit. The Spirit is kind and merciful. The Spirit is full of grace. The Spirit is longsuffering. The Spirit is meek. The Spirit is peaceful. The Spirit is temperate and gentle. The Spirit is omniscient and all powerful. And the Holy Spirit has been sent to abide with you and in you forever. That is why the Bible teaches that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. (I Corinthians 6:19)