

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Bible Reading - John Chapter 16 verses 5 to 15 (Amplified Version)

This is Jesus speaking to His disciples:

⁵ “But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts [and taken complete possession of them]. ⁷ But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counsellor, Strengthener, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you]. ⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world about [the guilt of] sin [and the need for a Saviour], and about righteousness, and about judgment: ⁹ about sin [and the true nature of it], because they do not believe in Me [and My message]; ¹⁰ about righteousness [personal integrity and godly character], because I am going to My Father and you will no longer see Me; ¹¹ about judgment [the certainty of it], because the ruler of this world (Satan) has been judged and condemned.

¹² “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear [to hear] them now. ¹³ But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth [full and complete truth]. For He will not speak on His own initiative, but He will speak whatever He hears [from the Father—the message regarding the Son], and He will disclose to you what is to come [in the future]. ¹⁴ He will glorify and honour Me, because He (the Holy Spirit) will take from what is Mine and will disclose it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Because of this I said that He [the Spirit] will take from what is Mine and will reveal it to you.”

SERMON

A chorus that we used to sing went like this, and these are the words of Holy Scripture.

‘The Promise of the Holy Spirit is for you, The Promise of the Holy Spirit is for your children, the promise of the Holy Spirit is for all Who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God will call, oh yeah, Acts chapter 2 verse 39.’

I used to love singing that chorus, but I haven't sung it for fifteen years.

Acts 2 verse 39 (AMP) actually says this.

'For **the promise [of the Holy Spirit]** is for you and your children and for all who are far away [including **the** Gentiles], as many as **the** Lord our God calls to Himself.'

In our reading today Jesus promised His disciples that He would send His Holy Spirit to them, *after* his bodily death and resurrection. I'm sure they didn't know what he was talking about, just like many people today struggle with all things spiritual, including even *the concept* of what we call the Holy Trinity, let alone what it actually is.

Three persons in one? That concept is very hard to imagine isn't it? But the good news is we don't have to understand such things, we are asked to believe in them, rather than try to work them out.

In our Bible Reading today, Jesus said to His disciples, "***I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you].***"

When Jesus says He will do something, it means He will do it. Jesus is, amongst other things, 'The Truth' and so He cannot lie.

Jesus is also God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit - that is *the Holy Trinity*).

Let's begin by recognising that belief (in what God and Jesus say) is **key** to the development and maturing of our faith. In fact in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 6 we read that '***Without faith it is impossible to walk with God and please Him.***' Faith and belief in God and His Holy Word – His promises - are key to enjoying a deeper relationship with God.

Paul tells us in his letter to the Roman Church that if we believe in the power of the Holy Spirit we will ***abound in hope and overflow with confidence in His promises.*** (Romans 15v 13).

Twice to the Church in Corinth He tells **believers** that the Holy Spirit has been sent to us to '***guarantee the fulfilment of (God's) promise of eternal life.***' (2 Corinthians 1v22 and 2 Corinthians 5v5).

Paul reminds the Church in Ephesus of this same truth (Ephesians 1v13) that as a result of believing by faith in Christ Jesus as their Saviour, they were on that very day of believing, '***stamped with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit [the One promised by Christ] as owned and protected [by God].***'

To the Church in Galatia Paul, tells them the promise of the Holy Spirit only comes **through faith** not by the Old Testament law. (Galatians 3v14).

I hope you are getting the message. The promise of the Holy Spirit is for you **if** you will *believe* in Him - and He comes to you **by faith**, (as a result of your faith).

Let me ask you a question. Answer it in your heart. How is your faith today?

Do you ***always*** believe the promises of God? Or do you feel more like doubting Thomas, who we talked about last month?

Do you find yourself often struggling with unbelief? Are you subconsciously listening to the lies of the enemy and consequently finding yourself worrying a lot?

According to Oswald Chambers (that great man of God I have quoted several times to you in the past), worrying means ***'God, I know you mean to leave me in the lurch.'*** (Oswald Chambers entry for 20th April).

If we accept God's Promises by faith, even when they take some time to materialise, then our answer will be along these lines...

"Thank you Father for the gift of your indwelling Holy Spirit, I trust in you to fulfil your promises - I trust you for my complete provision."

On the other hand, if your faith is lacking, and you allow yourself to worry, your response may be more akin to...

"Hmmm. Promises? What promises? I feel that God is going to leave me in the lurch..."

Chambers says the answer to the question "Is God able to fulfil His promises' depends on whether or not we have been filled with the Holy Spirit. And I agree.

So being filled with the Holy Spirit will give us an unflinching faith, trusting in God even when times are really difficult. No longer will we doubt.

According to the Bible, Paul had to remind Spirit-filled Christians in Corinth that their body was ***'a temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you, whom you have [received as a gift] from God.'*** (1 Corinthians 6 v 19). So even when we are

Spirit-filled, it is not guaranteed that our faith won't waiver from time to time. We might get caught up in sin from time to time, too. But overall, our entire life will be different to what it was before we asked God's Holy Spirit to live in us.

Now I want to look at some of the key verses in today's Bible reading to see what we can discover about some of the many other benefits of inviting the Holy Spirit into our lives

Firstly, I want to focus on: Verses 7 to 11...

'I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counsellor, Strengthener, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you].⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world about [the guilt of] sin [and the need for a Saviour], and about righteousness, and about judgment:⁹ about sin [and the true nature of it], because they do not believe in Me [and My message];¹⁰ about righteousness [personal integrity and godly character], because I am going to My Father and you will no longer see Me; ¹¹ about judgment [the certainty of it], because the ruler of this world (Satan) has been judged and condemned.'

What do we see here?

Jesus reassures us that He tells the truth. The Holy Spirit only comes because Jesus has gone back to the Father. It's a mystery, Jesus overcame death, He now has His glorified body, and lives for ever. He could have stayed here on earth and been our comforter, but for reasons best known to God, Jesus returned to Heaven (on Ascension Day which we celebrate next Thursday) and then He sends the Holy Spirit. We can't see Him, and be careful of liberal theologians who decline to refer to Him as 'He'. 'He' is he - not 'it'. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit 'He' and that's good enough for me!

What does the Holy Spirit bring to us if we receive Him? By the way, He won't force Himself upon you, you need to receive Him. You need to ask Him into your life – if you haven't already.

Firstly, this text says 'He is our helper'. The Greek word used here is *Paracletos*, and it means 'one called alongside to help'.

Is it any wonder God sent His Holy Spirit to us. After all, we all need help during our life time, don't we?

I **certainly** do. In fact I find I need God's help every day, sometimes, just to survive the day!!

So he is our helper.

I love the Amplified Bible because so often the Greek or Hebrew doesn't translate simply into English so this translation of The Bible gives an amplified meaning. In the text, we read that helper also means **Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counsellor, Strengtheners, Standby.**

Let's start then with 'Comforter'.

Do you feel comforted today? If not, ask God to send you His Holy Spirit to comfort you. I've heard people who have hardly anything, tell of how peaceful and comforted they feel. Why? Because they are believers who know they are a 'Temple of the Holy Spirit' and they feel assured by His daily presence in their lives.

Second, the Holy Spirit is our advocate. That means He is one who 'pleads the cause of another', one who 'defends your cause', one who 'supports or promotes your interests'.

When you were younger and you went for a job interview, did you ever wonder why you got the job? If you are filled with the Holy Spirit it was not just because of your God-given talents, it was because the Holy Spirit pleaded your cause supernaturally with the employer and promoted your interests – he gave you that post out of love for you and because He cares for you.

I believe if you didn't get the job, it was because you wouldn't have fitted in, or you wouldn't have been happy there, or because God had something far better in mind for you. God is very interested in every tiny detail of your life and that includes the practical stuff, like getting a job or what home you live in!

The Holy Spirit is not only pleading your cause in the work place, or in your relationships or when the devil is on your case; the Holy Spirit is **interceding** for you. He is pleading your cause in God's throne-room. As the devil accuses you before God, the Holy Spirit brings the truth into the situation and God judges you as righteous because of the blood His Son shed for you on the Cross of Calvary.

Thirdly, He is our counsellor (our adviser).

If you don't know what to do about a difficult situation, ask the Holy Spirit. He will give you perfect advice. Advice you couldn't buy from any man (or woman).

Are you feeling afraid today? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you overcome your fear. He will reveal the truth to you. He will remind you of the Scriptures, for example: **'No weapon that is formed against you will succeed'** (Isaiah 54 v 17). Or this one, **'And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good, for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan and purpose'**. (Romans 8 verse 28).

Fourthly, the Holy Spirit is our Strengthenener.

If you are feeling weak today; if you can't see how you are going to get through the rest of the day, let alone next week, call on your Strengthenener. He will show you a way where there is no apparent way. He will give you supernatural overcoming strength when you have no strength in the natural. Lean heavily on Him. He **can** take the load. Jesus said 'Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me [following Me as My disciple], for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest (renewal, blessed quiet) for your souls. (Matthew 11 v 29).

The Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ wants to provide rest for your tired weary soul. Invite Him in so He can do just that!

Finally the Holy Spirit is your Standby.

I like that! I sometimes wish I had a standby button, don't you. Especially when I'm worn out, got more to do, can't cope, but I can't switch off just yet.

"I know, I'll press the standby button!" Holy Spirit I can't cope, please take over while I have a rest.

Actually 'standby' means so much more than that. The Amplified Bible is written in American and just listen to an American dictionary's meaning of the word 'standby'...

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary there are two meanings as a noun, firstly: **'One to be relied on, especially in emergencies'** and **'a favourite or reliable choice or resource'**.

The second meaning is **'one that is held in reserve, ready for use.'**

This dictionary also tells us that to 'put on standby' **means 'ready or available for immediate action or use'**.

I love the thought that we can rely upon the Holy Spirit, He is a reliable choice and there He is in reserve, tireless, always ready for use when we need His advice, wisdom, strength or peace.

The next thing we learn from this Scripture is that the Holy Spirit's role is also to convict the world of sin and its need of a Saviour – Jesus Christ. Unlike the devil, the Holy Spirit doesn't condemn us; He convicts us. He brings our sin to our attention and offers us the way of escape - of confession, forgiveness and repentance. In other words, the admission that what we are doing - or have done - is wrong and that we can choose to turn away from our sins and live the new life that can only be lived in the Spirit; allowing Him to do in and for us what we cannot do in our own strength. Why, because 'the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.' (As Jesus said in Matthew 26 v 41).

We learn here too, that the Holy Spirit convicts about righteousness and judgement. Why does He need to do this?

Because it says Jesus is going to His Father, His job here on earth is done and now it is down to the Holy Spirit to continue God's work. It also tells us judgement is coming for the lost and the devil, because the ruler of this world (Satan) has been judged and condemned to his eternal fate in the lake of fire. That act of judgement hasn't come yet, so although the devil was defeated at the Cross, battles continue to be fought until the return of Christ.

I want to close by looking briefly at what we can learn from verses 13 and 14:

¹³ 'But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth [full and complete truth]. For He will not speak on His own initiative, but He will speak whatever He hears [from the Father—the message regarding the Son], and He will disclose to you what is to come [in the future]. ¹⁴ He will glorify and honour Me, because He (the Holy Spirit) will take from what is Mine and will disclose it to you.'

Here we see a repetition of the fact that the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth to us. Jesus only ever spoke what His Father told Him too. Here we learn that likewise the Holy Spirit only speaks the truth as revealed to Him by Father God.

Also the Holy Spirit glorifies and honours Jesus in all that He does, and discloses to us what Jesus tells Him.

If you struggle to understand the Bible, when you pick up that great Book, pray to God that He will reveal to you - by His Holy Spirit - exactly what He wants to tell you as you read it.

When I realised I had to do that, God opened up the Scriptures to me in a completely new way.

Finally, we learn here that the Holy Spirit will also disclose to us what is to come. From time to time, God speaks to me and also Michele and tells us things we couldn't know unless the Word came to us from God supernaturally. Many Christians have this experience. In some cases, as Paul confirms in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 God appoints specific people to be prophets to reveal in a Church-setting something God has told them about the present time, or the future. Also, as confirmed in Scripture, some of us will receive 'Words of Knowledge' from God to speak to others to help them with an issue they may be struggling with, of which the person giving the word, has no knowledge.

As I close, let me remind you the Holy Spirit is a gift from God. Father God loves to shower us with His gifts, but gifts have to be received.

You may say to me "Well I'm sure I have received the Holy Spirit already".

And that's fine; I would say to you "Is your life different to how it was before you received the Holy Spirit into your life?"

You see, you can accept Jesus into your life and profess to be a Christian and that is indeed a wonderful thing to do. But, if I can put it this way, all the fullness of God, all that He wants for you, doesn't come until and unless you accept His Holy Spirit into your life as well as His Son.

And why would anyone not want that, when we have heard of all the wonderful things that come with the infilling of the Holy Spirit?

If you said to me "Well I am not sure if I have been filled or not, how can I know if He is in me?"

I would answer, we know because the way we are now is different to how we were before. Our automatic default has changed, and so we put God and

others ahead of ourselves. We actually want to put our old natural self to death so that God's Spirit in us can rule over our fleshly, selfish desires.

And you will know you are filled with the Spirit because your behaviour - your actions and words - will demonstrate this change to all who know you. Your new life will be characterised by what Paul calls the Fruit of the Spirit....

'The fruit of the Spirit [the result of His presence within us] is love [unselfish concern for others], joy, [inner] peace, patience [not the ability to wait, but how we act while waiting], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.' Galatians 5 verses 22 and 23.

Before I close, I want you to know that the promise of the Holy Spirit isn't for some Christians and not others. It is for everyone who will believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Sadly many Christians never enter the fullness of life that God has for them. The reason is because they either **don't** or **can't** believe in the Holy Spirit, or because their Church leaders have not preached about receiving the Holy Spirit, or because they are too frightened to receive Him.

If you haven't received the Holy Spirit, don't be frightened, He is your Comforter. The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Holy Trinity. If you haven't received the Holy Spirit, and you would like to, please ask me and Michele to pray for you today. A simple prayer and faith (a personal belief) is all that is required.

AMEN

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