

## The Blessings of Jesus' Absence: Part 3

John 14:15–31

Studies in John #34

“**T**HERE is pointed out in the Bible a path, consisting of seven simple steps, which any one who will can take, and whoever takes these seven steps will, with absolute certainty, enter into this blessing [of baptism with the Holy Spirit].” I remember being a disillusioned 21 year old because I sought this baptism, but didn't receive it, while so many of my classmates had it, but didn't live for the Lord. Someone gave me a copy of R.A. Torrey's book, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, and told me to follow his steps to this blessing. At least I can say I tried! He went on to say at the end of these steps:

Men have to wait only when they do not meet the conditions, when Christ is not fully accepted, or sin is not put away, or there is not total surrender, or true desire, or definite prayer, or simple faith, just taking upon the naked Word. The absence of some of these things keeps many waiting for more than ten days sometimes. But there is no need that any reader of this book wait ten hours. You can have the Baptism with the Holy Spirit just now, if you will.<sup>1</sup>

There is so much confusion about the Holy Spirit *within* the church of Jesus Christ. Thankfully Jesus gives us instruction on who he is in his Upper Room Discourse. He's going to be absent from his disciples but he says this comes with added benefits. The first two were the preparation of eternal life and the clearer revelation of who the Father is in relation to the Son and Holy Spirit. This morning we'll focus on this third blessing: the Holy Spirit.

## THE GIFT

Note first that THE GIFT of the Holy Spirit is the third blessing of Jesus' absence.

Let me *recap* since we're picking up in the middle of a conversation.

Jesus said he's going away; Peter asked where; Jesus replied you know the way; Thomas confusingly said if we don't know where how can we know the way; Jesus said I am the way to the Father; Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father" (v. 8). Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (v. 9) and, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? Believe me...or else believe on account of the works themselves" (v. 11).

Which works? Recall the wonderful promise in verses 12–14: the one who believes will do the greater things of saving multitudes of sinners, which is even greater than Jesus' works. When we ask him anything concerning the work of preaching and converting sinners, he will do it. Then he says in verse 15 where we left off: **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."** We read that "*God* so loved the world," that "*Jesus* loved his own to the end," and that we are to "*love one another*" (3:16; 13:1; 13:34). But verse 15 is the first time Jesus has spoken of his disciples love *for him*. Love for him is demonstrated in keeping his commands, in particular the command he's just issued: ask me anything concerning the greater work of proclamation.

Here's the question: how do these greater things take place? The disciples ask him by means of prayer but the power of accomplishment comes by the gift of the Holy Spirit. "You ask me," then Jesus says, "**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.**"

Jesus *goes* to the glory of the Father (v. 12) so that when we ask him there the Father will *give*. That's the language of a gift.

What does the Father gift his people with? **Another Helper**. Who's that? The Holy Spirit, right? But how do you know that? Look at the next verse that clarifies and defines: **even the Spirit of truth** (v. 17). Look at what Jesus calls the Holy Spirit in verse 16: the NIV says, "Counselor." When you hear that you might be thinking "camp counselor" or "marriage counselor." The ESV we're using translates as **Helper**, but that could be anything whether a friend who helps you move or Siri, who helps you navigate! The old King Jimmy says "Comforter," but that's a blanket to us! The word Jesus uses is παράκλητον, from the root παράκλητος. A παράκλητος was the legal term used for your defense attorney and those who would act as your witnesses, coming alongside of you to testify, give help, give counsel, and give you comfort. This is why the term "advocate" better encapsulates the idea.

But why is he called **another Helper**, ἄλλον παράκλητον? If the Holy Spirit is **another Helper** what does that imply? If I'm talking with Duncan, Lauren walks up, and I say to Duncan, "Let me introduce you to another friend Lauren," what am I saying about Duncan? He's a friend. When Jesus says the Holy Spirit is **another Advocate** what's he saying about himself? He's also a παράκλητος. John doesn't use the term for Jesus in the Gospel, but in 1 John 2:1 he later says, "if anyone does sin, we have an *advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The interchangeability of this phrase for Jesus and the Spirit illustrates that most beautiful of doctrines: the Triune nature of God as the persons are united in the one divine essence. It also shows the diversity of persons. In Romans 8, for example, Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of God [the Father]" and "the Spirit of Christ" (v. 9).

Do you think it's important to know the Spirit as *gift*? One of the things so many of us experienced in the Charismatic Movement and Pentecostalism, which we still see our friends seeking after, is to have an encounter, an experience of the Spirit *without* knowing the Spirit. You cannot know the *what* until you know the *who*! On the flip side, we—you know, *the frozen chosen*—can throw the baby out with the bathwater and know a lot about the Spirit himself without ever experiencing him. This has been the focus of our bi-monthly

men's theology discussion. Men, spread the word! Note verse 17 where Jesus says of **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.** John actually uses the proper gender neuter pronouns here since "Spirit" is neuter; but later in verse 26 John breaks grammatical convention and uses the personal pronoun **he** (ἐκεῖνος) because the Holy Spirit is no mere force or power: he's a divine person. Jesus' disciples and you are not only to know about the Spirit, you are to know *him* as you know Jesus and the Father.

#### THE GIFTS

Let me transition by asking why is it that you write thank you notes for gifts received at a wedding, Christmas, or a birthday? One reason is that even if you don't know the giver, you want to establish some sort of a relationship. So many Christians today want all the gifts of the Spirit without knowing the Spirit himself. To know the Spirit as gift leads to appreciation for THE GIFTS.

The first is *his presence*. Jesus says the Father's gift of **another Advocate** will **be with you forever** (v. 16). Why's that so important? The disciples feel like abandoned orphans. But in contrast to **the world** that **cannot receive** the Spirit **because it neither sees him nor knows him**—words in John for experiential faith—**you know him**. How do we know this? **For he dwells with**

**you and will be in you** (v. 17). Don't think in crass spatial terms, as if there's a compartment in the middle of your chest cavity where he goes! This language is meant to communicate that he's present with us even as Jesus is absent.

What's so fascinating is that Jesus says we also have the presence of and communion with Jesus and the Father. Jesus reassures his disciples: **"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you"** (v. 18). With his death on the horizon he says, **"yet a little while and the world will see me no more"** because he'd be crucified and buried **"but you will see me"** (v. 19). How? The resurrection: **"Because I live, you also will live"** (v. 19). **"In that day"**—when I am resurrected—**"you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you"** (v. 20). And this presence will continue by the Spirit.

We also have the presence of and communion with the Father. Jesus links our love for him with the Father's love for us and Jesus' love for us: **"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"** (v. 21). That led Judas (not Iscariot) to speak up: **"Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"** (v. 22) He asks this because *manifest* is a public appearance: how can you be seen by us but not by the world? Jesus is using **see** as a tangible

synonym for faith, not crassly as Judas misunderstands: **“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word** (note the switch from particular *commandments* to the general *word*), **and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him”** (v. 23). Even as Jesus is going to the glory of the Father to prepare eternal life for us the full Trinitarian presence is with us.

The second of the Spirit’s gifts is *his teaching*. He who is “the truth” (John 14:6) speaks of “the Spirit of truth’s” (v. 17) future teaching ministry when Jesus is absent bodily: **“But the *Advocate*, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *he* (there’s that personal pronoun) will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”** (v. 26).

Sound familiar from the Old Testament? I’ll read a passage and you tell me:

“...I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me.” (Jer. 31:31, 33–34)

We praise God the Holy Spirit today in our actions because by his ministry in the lives of the apostles, we have the same truth inscripturated!

## CONCLUSION

Jesus concludes this part of his discourse taking us back to its beginning: “Where I am going you cannot follow me now” (13:36). They were worried,

but Shalom incarnate says, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.”** The *pax Romana* came through the sword; Jesus’ peace comes through the Spirit. **“Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid”** (v. 27).

Why not? Because his absence is actually a blessing: **“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”** (v. 28). In other words, in my state of humiliation as the Son of God in flesh, the Father is my Father too; my absence from you on earth is a blessing to me in glory.

Jesus has spoken all of this so that they’d believe: **“And now I have told you before it [my death and resurrection] takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe”** (v. 29). It’s also that the world would believe: **“I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father”** (v. 31).

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> R.A. Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897), 37, 60.