

The Wonder of the Holy Spirit

John 14:15-27

BBC, July 20, 2014

PROPOSITION: *In the Holy Spirit, God is with us and for us!*

- God joins us (vs. 15-20)
- God changes us (vs. 21-24)
- God teaches us (vs. 25-26)
- God comforts us (v. 27)

John 14:15-27:

15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 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. 18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

21 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.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23 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. 24 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.

25 “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 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.

27 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.

This is the Word of the Lord. You may be seated. **Let's pray that God would change us now as we consider His Word together.**

The next 3 weeks we get to study the Holy Spirit together through Jesus' teaching in John 14-16. This is an amazing study. Whenever we study God – we are humbled, admitting right away that we can never measure the depths of His glory, or fully comprehend the mystery of His infinite person and work. We humbly join with the prophet Isaiah saying,

40:13 Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?

And yet I believe such study of God is so good for us. Gazing upon God as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word awakens us to the folly of our idolatries. We can get too content with cheap substitutes... not even aware that we are living in obvious neglect of God's power, presence, and provision of Himself to us.

This seems especially true with the Holy Spirit. It seems that in the church today, the Holy Spirit is either "The Forgotten God" or "The Freaky God." Some practically live as if there are only really two divine persons in the Trinity – the Father and the Son, and thus fall into legalism. Others only focus on the Holy Spirit only to refute the common abuses of mysticism, rather than on what Scripture reveals to us about this wonderful person of the triune God-head.

It's like what happened recently to my parents. (And yes they have given me permission to share this with you!)

Growing up with three boys in our family, we grew up loving to snorkel in the ocean. But our dad is more of a land-lubber, and snorkeling was never something that he enjoyed. He is a sinker in the water, would always seem to swallow too much salt water, and his goggles would always leak. Dad still maintains to this day that salt water burns his eyes more than it burns anyone else's eyes! So recently Mom convinced him to give it another go...without the pressure of us three rowdy boys urging him on. Dad's greatest concern was that he didn't want to get any salt water in his eyes...so before they even left the room Mom helped him put the goggles on, get them properly adjusted, make sure they were comfortably tight, and good to go.

Then they took their time going into the water on a calm day, just knee deep, all the while Mom was assuring him just to relax, and try to enjoy it.

So Dad gently started to float...and immediately... got agitated and stood up in blubbering desperation. Mom asked, "what's wrong, did you get water in your goggles?" Dad replied in frustration, "Right away! Right away!"

Confused, mom looked closer, and noticed to her shock...that Dad's goggles were missing one of the lenses!

Yep it was back in the room all the time!

They had been so close to the truth, and in some ways so familiar with it, that they didn't even notice what they were missing.

I think this can happen to us sometimes... especially as it relates to the wonder of God's Spirit. We can live apart from Him, outside of His power and presence, without even being aware that we are setting ourselves up for spiritual failure.

A. W. Tozer says it well,

"We may as well face it: the whole level of spirituality among us is low. We have measured ourselves by ourselves until the incentive to seek higher plateaus in the things of the Spirit is all but gone... [We]

have imitated the world, sought popular favor, manufactured delights to substitute for the joy of the Lord and produced a cheap and synthetic power to substitute for the power of the Holy Ghost.” A. W. Tozer

So I ask you this morning, Are you living in the supernatural power and presence of the Holy Spirit...or have you contented yourself with a cheaper substitute?

Today we learn that *In the Holy Spirit, God is with us and for us!*

Although the activity of the Holy Spirit is best demonstrated in Acts, there is no extended section of Scripture that contains more teaching on the Holy Spirit than John 14-16. This is a great passage! In John 14, Jesus is in the upper room celebrating the last supper with his disciples. Judas will betray him in just a few hours. The air hangs thick with significance.

For the disciples, the last week has been an emotional roller coaster! 6 days earlier Jesus was heralded as King by the fickle crowds in a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus then cursed the fig tree, cleansed the temple (for the 2nd time), was sought by Gentiles, and was affirmed by voice from Heaven, all the while facing severe and repeated opposition from the ruling religious leaders. In the last week Jesus had taught 8 different parables, pronounced 7 woes upon the Jewish leaders, and taught a lot about His 2nd coming in His Olivet Discourse.

He was now at the Passover meal. He had washed the disciples' feet, and identified Judas as the betrayer. Judas was gone, leaving the 11 to argue about who would be greatest. Jesus had predicted Peter's denial, and He had instituted the Lord's Supper at the conclusion of their meal. And then comes John 14:1,

“Let not your hearts be troubled....

It's not to stretch to figure out why their hearts were distressed! In ch 12:23-34 Jesus had clearly taught his disciples that the Son of Man must die. He had just told them that one of their own was going to betray him. He said clearly He was going to leave them, and that where He was going, they could not come. Even Peter was going to deny him 3 times. And so chapter 14 offers God's peace to troubled hearts.

Look at chapter 14 with me now. In verses 1-6, Jesus assures the disciples that by believing in Him they have a home in heaven. His absence from them will be temporary and purposeful. And in verses 7-11, they are reminded that they still know the Father. In verses 12-14 Jesus reminds them of their privilege of prayer – and that even from heaven He is able to hear and answer their prayers.

And then in verse 15 we find our first truth about the Wonder of God's Spirit. Jesus wants his disciples – He wants us today – to know that in His Holy Spirit,

- **God joins us** (vs. 15-20)

We are not left alone. No orphans in God's family. No abandoned people with nowhere to turn. Because of the Holy Spirit, we are not helpless nor hopeless.

In verse 15 we see that God joins us...

- ...to help us obey Him from the heart (15)

14:15 *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

As Jesus looked into the sad faces of the 11 disciples around the table, He wanted them to understand what it truly meant to love Him. Jesus didn't want them to prove their love to him by weeping or lamenting or throwing a pity-party at His departure. The true test of love for God is not how many emotions we can express. No... Love is shown by ongoing practical obedience to His commands. As John wrote later in **1 John 2:3-5** says,

³ *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.* ⁴ *Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,* ⁵ *but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.*

Let me ask you 2 questions:

1. Would you say that you love God?
2. Would you say that you are in the practice of keeping His commandments?

According to Jesus' words, your answers to these questions must agree.

To be clear, keeping God's commands is not what saves us. God alone saves us by grace through faith. But obedience is the proof of genuine love. To disobey Christ is to call into question His character. You cannot say you love God if you are not obeying the clear commands of His Word.

But the reality is that when it comes to perfectly obeying all the commands of our Holy God... none of us have what it takes.

This is the wonder of God's provision to us in His Gospel. Consider God's New Covenant promise given to the prophet Ezekiel:

²⁶ *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* ²⁷ *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.* **Ezekiel 36:26-27**

In the Holy Spirit, God has joined us. Not like a piece of equipment that you add on to yourself before you snorkel. He actually comes and lives within us. Let not your heart be troubled! Now that Jesus has ascended into the heavens, the Holy Spirit actually joins us with Jesus – the One who says in **John 15:10**, *...I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

Because we have been given the Holy Spirit, we are declared obedient and righteous in Christ, and give evidence of our newfound love through our obedience to His commands.

Further, in the Holy Spirit God joins us...

- ...to live in us forever (16-18)

This is so wonderful. Look with me at verses 16-18...there is so much in these verses.

Check out the Trinitarian reference. Here God the Son is asking God the Father to send God the Spirit to dwell forever with those who believe on Him.

And notice that he didn't ask the Father to send help... but a Helper. Some translations use the word "Comforter," or "Advocate." The word means "one called alongside to help." And you might underline that little word "another" ... for in the original language this specifically means "another of the same kind."

The Holy Spirit is not essentially different from Jesus. No, He is another Helper of the same kind. He too is Emmanuel – God with us!

The disciples had to be asking themselves, how can we go on if you aren't going to be here with us? You are our master teacher. What happens when you leave us?

Have you ever wished that Jesus Christ could just be standing right with you in the flesh, functioning as your personal Helper? Imagine the peace that you would have knowing that you would always receive perfect truth and flawless counsel from Him!

But in the Holy Spirit, God joins us in an even better way – for He isn't just alongside us, but now God is *in* us. If we were talking snorkel gear, it would be like internally being given fish eyes. Look at the end of verse 17. Dwelling inside hearts of faith, and living in us forever!

Precious believer ... The Holy Spirit is with you at all times – He is your Helper in the sad times, the lonely times, the joyful times, the stressful times, etc.

But notice verse 17 again... the Holy Spirit cannot be received by the world. **1 Cor. 2:14** says,

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

It's like unbelievers don't have a radio, so they aren't even aware of the radio waves all around them, and can't discern them.

The Spirit of Truth is only for those who believe in Jesus Christ. To receive Him means to submit to Him. And those who reject the Lordship of Christ have no part of the Spirit's blessing.

So has God's Spirit united your heart to Christ?

If so, then in the Holy Spirit God joins with us...

- ...to show us more of Himself (19-20)

In verses 19-20 Jesus tells the disciples that while he is going away in the flesh, He will continue to live. And the Holy Spirit will continue to show Christ to us. He is the Head, and we are the body. Our spiritual life both today and forever is secured in the fact that Jesus lives! And just as Jesus and the Father are united into One, so likewise the Spirit unites Christ and His disciple by faith...so that we might know more and more of Him.

You are not alone dear believer. Because He lives, I can face tomorrow! You now have the power to obey His commands from your heart, as He lives in you forever, and continues to show you more and more of Himself through His Word.

Without a doubt, God is with us and for us in His Holy Spirit! But notice also that according to verses 21-24, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit...

- **God changes us** (vs. 21-24)

Believers are transformed by God's love into a new way of living by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is good news! First, God's Spirit changes us...

- ...into a lover of God (21-24)

In verses 21-24, Jesus again emphasizes the truth of verse 15. Spiritual love for God produces an obedience of faith. In other words, obedience is the true test of a disciple's love. Love is the root, obedience is the fruit. The indicators of true spirituality and love for God are not how you talk about Christ, or what you know about Christ, or even how radical or bizarre you are in your beliefs.

And likewise true spirituality is not just legalistically following a bunch of rules. Verse 24 makes it abundantly clear that the one who continues to not love God is not going to obey His teaching. Doing God's will is the only sure test of love to Him.

Have you experienced this kind of change? Is your love for God growing and giving proof of God's Spirit in you?

Now in verse 22, Judas son of James (also known as Thaddaeus in Matthew 10:3 and Mark 3:18) interrupts Jesus' teaching, because he's still trying to figure out what had happened that Jesus was no longer going to reveal Himself to the world. Had there been a change in Jesus' plan? You see, even after all Jesus' teaching, the disciples still expected that Jesus, as Messiah, was going to reveal His identity to the world.

But Jesus shows that God's Spirit was making another change. In the Holy Spirit, God changes us ...

- ...into a witness for God (22)

The next time Jesus reveals Himself to the world it will be in judgment at His second coming. But in the meantime, the Holy Spirit – God with us – dwells within Christ’s followers so that we will bear witness of Him and His love to the world.

Sometimes when we think of witnessing to our unbelieving family and friends, we think we need to know answers to all their hard questions, or know exactly which verses to use, etc. And some of that can be helpful at times. But the witness of Christ that is empowered by God’s Spirit is simply a contagious love for Christ that takes God at His Word, and believes Him enough to obey His commands. A love for God that overflows into genuine love for others through obedience to His Word.

Such a believer is dearly loved and cared for by our Heavenly Father, for by the Holy Spirit God also changes us...

- ...into a temple of God (23)

Note the plural pronoun used at the end of verse 23. The triune God – Father, Son, and Spirit – come and make their home in the heart of the one who abides in their love. This word for home is actually the same word for “rooms” in verse 2.

This is such an amazing change for a humble soul who was once enslaved to sin and dead in its former manner of life. What once was empty and full of dead man’s bones is now made into a spiritual tabernacle for God Himself!

Paul glories in this same truth in **1 Cor 3:16**,

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?

This morning do you think yourself poor, lonely, and aloof?

Friend, if you believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then you are in the best of company. You are the temple of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. You are never alone, and are never poor. While Christ is Himself preparing heaven for you, He has sent “heaven” to your heart on earth as you commune with the Lord and worship Him.

Let not your heart be troubled with any fear of abandonment that you may be facing today. In the Holy Spirit, God is with you and for you!

You are not the same. His Spirit has changed you! You are now a lover of God, and such love bears witness for God through your obedient living, as you enjoy the sweet intimacy of God Himself dwelling in you each and every day.

From this passage then we can answer an important question. What does it mean to experience God personally? What does it mean to intimately know God as He tabernacles within us?

How do we personally experience God's presence today? <<chart>>

First, God's Spirit reveals God's love to us in the Gospel (Rom 8:15) *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"* Spiritual communion with God is always initiated by God through His Gospel love. There is no more precious truth than God's love for me in Christ. It compels me deeper into thanksgiving and worship to Him, so that I listen humbly when, God's Spirit teaches us & brings His Word to our mind (Jn 14:26) And having been so loved by God, I love Him in return as His Spirit empowers my response of obedience & faith (Jn 14:23). Interestingly as I pursue loving God by keeping His Word, God's Spirit assures that we do know God (Rom 8:16, 1 Jn 2:3-5). *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ... And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.* ...and so our assurance of knowing God and being in personal communion with Him is strengthened through our heart responses of love and obedience. Step by step Our joyful communion with God ever-deepens until we find ourselves as His eternal bride as revealed in Rev 21:3-4, when *the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.*

And so while our understanding of God and His Spirit will always be a mystery, I pray that God's desired relationship with you through His Spirit has been de-mystified a bit. The relationship of God's Spirit to you is not inherently freaky. But He is transforming. He is holy. And He is supernaturally powerful in His love, His witness, and His dwelling in us.

So in the Holy Spirit, God joins us, changes us, and also

- **God teaches us** (vs. 25-26)

Consider verses 25-26...Jesus continues encouraging the confused disciples, that though they might not understand all that He has taught them so far, the Father will send them a Helper in His very name. In other words, God teaches us through His Spirit,

- ...in order to glorify Jesus Christ (25-26a)

The Spirit is called Holy, and He is always Christ-centered. Here again in verse 26 – all three persons of the Trinity are named, working together without contradiction, intimately united in their divine mission. To be sent in Jesus' name helps us to understand that God's Spirit is always given and not "gotten." It can't be bought (e.g. Simon in Acts 8:19), or achieved by any religious rite. It is a gift to each and every one of Christ's followers, and in the name of Jesus He operates as His agent or representative with His same power and authority.

And verse 26 reveals the content of His teaching. In the Holy Spirit, God teaches us,

- ...to understand all spiritual truth (26b)

These truths are so important for us today as a church. Do you see in vs 26, *The Holy Spirit will teach you all things*... all things in the context here doesn't speak of mathematics or geography...but all spiritual truth ... the full revelation of the God's Gospel and His Scriptures.

We would all agree that this church has been blessed with dozens of men and women who are gifted teachers. But let us always remember that Bethany only has one teacher at the end of the day. His Name is Holy Spirit. If He doesn't teach, there is no spiritual teaching. But when the Helper is teaching, the eyes of human hearts are supernaturally opened and faith is born, repentance is granted, obedience is practiced, love is shared, and hope is secured.

So would you like to know how you can study and understand the Bible? Learn from the Holy Spirit. Humbly listen to God's Spirit and seek to obey God's Word as He reveals it to you. You will understand God's words. You don't need to know Greek or Hebrew. You don't need to go to seminary or Bible college. The Spirit of Truth teaches you! The Bible is the only book that you can read that every time you read it, the Author is sitting with you, to help you understand what you are reading!

But You say, it's so hard for me since I can't see the Holy Spirit. He is Spirit after all...and that means He is invisible.

Just like my parents standing in the ocean doing this. (poking finger thru the hole where the goggle's lens was supposed to be?) Even though a clean lens is invisible to the sight, it makes all the difference to what a person sees in the water. Without the presence of that clear lens, the beauty of God's creation is hidden from the understanding of the swimmer. But when sight is illuminated by the power of the lens, a whole new understanding comes to the viewer. And so it is with God's Spirit. He illuminates our understanding. His presence – though unseen to us – makes all the spiritual difference in the world.

But notice at the end of verse 26 that God's Spirit also teaches us,

- ...to remember His Word (26c)

Here Jesus is assuring His 11 disciples that after Pentecost they will be given the ability from the Holy Spirit to accurately recall all the words and works of Jesus and write them down as Scripture. And similarly for us today, God's Spirit helps bring to mind the life-changing truths of God's word to convict us, to usher us deeper into God's Gospel, and to make us more like Christ. The Holy Spirit thus helps us to apply God's Word into specific relationships, responsibilities, and situations.

Certainly we know that God is with us and for us in His Spirit! For He has joined with us, He changes us, He teaches, and finally, in His Spirit,

- **God comforts us** (v. 27)

As the time around the table drew to a close now, Jesus speaks a farewell blessing in verse 27 which would long ring in the ears of every one of His disciples.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

God comforts us,

- ...by giving us His peace (27a)

Peace. Wholeness. Abiding Joy. Contentment. Security. Dear follower of Jesus, you don't have to be afraid anymore. With all that you see falling apart in the world around you. God's Spirit is here. He is with you. He is for you. And He has given you Christ's peace.

O friend... if you don't have peace in your soul today, then listen careful to this wonderful invitation for you. If today you believe you are far from God, and still do not trust God's love enough to obey Him, then please know that by placing your faith *in Jesus you can be brought near to the saving heart of God by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace...reconciling us to God through the cross* (Eph 2:13-16). Romans 5:1 says that *since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Do you believe that God sent His only Son as the God-man into this sinful world, to be born of a virgin, to live a sinless life, so that He could take the death penalty for every sinner who would believe in Him? Jesus died on that cross as your substitute. The wages of sin is death...but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. He died in your place. It was His love that hung Him there for you and me. And when you believe that Jesus died for your sins, and rose on the third day as conqueror of sin and death, then God's peace is given to you! And there is no greater peace that you could ever know than a permanent, right relationship with God Himself!

Such peace is never earned by us, but God comforts us through His Holy Spirit,

- ...by grace through faith (27b)

As our text says, the peace of God is granted so differently than how the world attempts to promise peace. (explain)

THE WONDER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	
The World's "Peace"	God's Peace
Based on resources	Based on relationships
Depends on personal ability	Depends on Christ's ability
Hoped for, Worked for	Gift received by faith
Temporary	Eternal
Enjoyed in absence of trouble	Enjoyed in spite of trouble
Focused on externals (by sight)	Focused on eternals (by faith)

But God's peace is all of grace. It is only granted to those who surrender their life to the loving Lordship of Christ, and repent of their sins, and believe in Him. And such peace is always secure...for it is apart from our circumstances, and rather eternally anchored in the perfect person and work of the Prince of Peace.

When I think of God's peace I think of my 40yr old cousin and friend who passed away 3 weeks ago from brain cancer. The cancer was diagnosed in May 2011. He fought hard, and outlived the doctor's expectations by years. But through it all, God's spirit gave him and his wife and his four young children peace. Peace that passes all human understanding. A peace that is so different than the world, it's impossible to understand unless God's Spirit is living inside you.

God's comfort is so deep and personal towards His children, for His Spirit comforts us,
○ ...by speaking to our hearts (27c)

Jesus' commands at the end of vs 27 repeat the command of verse 1 – *Let not your hearts be troubled, and neither let them be afraid.* The words are clear – stop an action already in process. Don't let your hearts continue on in a troubled state. Don't let your hearts continue on in fear. Even though you do not understand everything in its fullness yet...I'm sending you another Helper in my name – the Holy Spirit. You need not be concerned. The confidence, love, and joy that characterized Jesus' life and ministry is made available to you. In the Holy Spirit, God is with you and for you!

This morning we've made a very humble attempt together at highlighting the wonder of the Holy Spirit from John 14. The blessings of God are so rich for those who are in Christ by faith. If you are not yet personally experiencing God's Spirit within you, then today is the day of salvation. Turn from your sins and repent. Believe in Christ, and receive His Spirit who will join you, change you, teach you, and eternally comfort you.