

JOHN 16

JESUS, THE GIVER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The last chapter concluded with the Savior's words of warning concerning the enmity of this world which will be shown toward His followers, in the form of persecution and death; and these words of warning are continued into the first six verses of this chapter. This enmity may be attributed to a willful, stubborn, and sinful ignorance of God, and to a hatred of Him as He has been revealed by Christ. The clear testimony borne by the words and works of Jesus only increases the guilt of such persons. In no other part of his Gospel has John declared more clearly the sinful nature of unbelief, and the peril of rejecting Christ; for to deny the Savior's claims, and to refuse to become His disciple, is to hate God and condemn one's own soul to hell!

The work of the Holy Spirit has been mentioned more than once in the course of this Gospel, especially in the previous chapters which spoke of the coming of the Comforter. But in no section of the narrative – and possibly in no part of Scripture – is His work so clearly set forth as it is here in verses 7-15. Jesus assures His disciples that the loss of His physical presence will be more than compensated by the coming of the Holy Spirit. He did not mean that the Holy Spirit had not previously been present and active in the world; but rather, He was saying that after His own death and resurrection and ascension, the Spirit would begin a work so marvelous and unique that it could properly be described under the figure of a “coming” or being “sent from the Father.” This work would have, as its very essence, the revelation of Jesus to His disciples in all the fullness of His Divine Person and work; and through the disciples, Jesus would be made known and proclaimed to the world. The office of the Comforter is to reveal to the believer all the Divine riches and grace that are in Christ. He takes the great realities of the Savior's Divine Person and work, and He makes their meaning clear and vital. Not only is this a benefit to the soul of the believer personally; but also, in preparation for witnessing to others of Jesus, we need the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit of truth.

Now the last words are to be spoken (verses 16-33). The time for separation has come. Jesus is going forth to betrayal and to death. Naturally, He reverts to the subject of His departure; but His last message of comfort is the same in essence as that which He has already conveyed. He is going away, but He encourages His disciples by assuring them once again that He will continue to be with them as an unseen and abiding presence. When the Holy Spirit has come in Pentecostal power, then the disciples will enjoy a truer and fuller fellowship

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *Jesus gives His disciples warning of the troubles that awaited them – verses 1-6*
- ❖ *He speaks again of the coming Comforter, and promises to visit His disciples again after His resurrection – verses 7-22*
- ❖ *He promises answers to prayer and victory in troubles – verses 23-33*

with Jesus than that which they enjoyed in the days of His earthly ministry. It is, in fact, the work of the Holy Spirit that we read of here in this section – just as in the verses which precede. His agency and the blessings which He confers are the very beginning and ending of the last conversation of our Lord with His disciples. As Jesus closes His farewell discourse, He teaches His followers that the real manifestation of His spiritual presence – by the agency of the Holy Spirit – will speedily follow His death. “A little while,” He says, “and ye behold me no more,” for He was to die the very next day; and “again a little while, and ye shall see me” – not only in resurrection; but also with enlarged spiritual vision, at Pentecost, and ever afterward. The disciples are puzzled at a such a mysterious promise, which suggested that the going away of Jesus was a condition of His more real presence; but He further reassures them by stating that their temporary anguish at the separation caused by His death will be forgotten in the joy of the spiritual reunion, which will be endless.

The influence of the Holy Spirit will further enlarge the knowledge of the disciples, as already suggested in verses 12-15. They will not need to make such inquiries of the Lord as they have made during this conversation. They will still pray; but it will be to the Father, in the name of the Son. After Pentecost, as never before, He was known to be the Son of God and the risen, glorified, invisible, Divine Lord and Savior – in Whose name, prayer surely prevails.

Finally, however, Jesus lays aside all figures of speech; and He plainly declares His Divine pre-existence, His incarnation, His death, and His resurrection: “I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father.” This, at last, the disciples seem to understand; and they assert their faith: “By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.” Jesus replies by telling them that their faith is to be sorely tested, and it will not be victorious at first: “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.” However, being united to Him by a strengthened faith, and by the power of His Spirit, they shall soon enjoy peace and they shall share the victory of their Master over the opposition and enmity of the world.

This closing paragraph is in peculiar harmony with the theme of John’s entire Gospel. The 14th chapter presents testimony to the Divine Person of Christ; the 15th emphasizes the need of a vital faith, by which believers can abide in Him; and this chapter enlarges upon the life which results from faith – a life

in which the Savior (by the power of His indwelling Spirit) makes His gracious presence real, gives increasing confidence in prayer, inspires heroic courage, and secures abiding peace!

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for encouraging us to cheer up because You have “overcome the world” – for now we fight with a beaten foe! Amen.

