

STUDY 3 – JOHN 14:25-34

In our 2 previous studies we have seen how Jesus has comforted his disciples as they wait for his coming departure, both the departure of the cross, and then the departure of his ascension when we do not have Jesus physically with us (which is the time we are living in now).

Jesus has to go, to prepare a place for us in his Father's house. However he does not leave his disciples alone – he will send his Spirit to dwell in his followers, and with them, being an even greater fulfilment of the promise that God will dwell with his people.

In this short section Jesus continues to comfort his disciples and to teach them about the vital work of the Holy Spirit (Verse 26 is the first time in this section he is given the adjective "Holy"). As he teaches, he is aware that the disciples will grasp only a small amount of what he is saying (this comes up again and again – see 13:19, 14:25, 14:29). One the vital roles of the Spirit will be to teach and remind his disciples of everything Jesus has taught.

Verse 26 is a crucial verse for understanding what it means for the Holy Spirit to be the "Spirit of truth" (see verse 17). He is God present in us and with us. But how does he teach us? Is every thought we have God speaking to us by his Spirit? Verse 26 makes it clear that the Spirit only teaches what Jesus has already taught. His teaching/reminding ministry is that of "everything I [Jesus] have said to you." It is not extra revelation.

It is important to see how verse 26 applies to us today. It is clear that in the first instance it is a promise to the 11 who were in the room with Jesus as he spoke. The role of the Holy Spirit is described as to "remind you of everything I have said with you." To be reminded of something only makes sense if you have first heard it. We were not present with Jesus as he taught privately and publically in Israel in the 1st century – so he can't remind us of those things.

The fact that the disciples were reminded and taught what Jesus had already taught them is of great importance to us today though. Just think about it. In these studies we are studying John's gospel, a book written by one of these 11 men who were in this upper room with Jesus. Like all the others, he did not understand what Jesus was saying at the time. How can we trust his recollection now? It is because of this great promise. The Holy Spirit brought the teaching of Jesus back to his mind and enabled him to understand it. There are hints throughout John's gospel that this is exactly what happened (see John 2:22). This verse shows that we can trust the Scriptures.

There is also a secondary application to us which also gives us confidence as we read our Bibles. The same Holy Spirit who was at work in the writing of the Bible is at work in us, so will help us as we read it. However what verse 26 categorically rules out is an extra revelation from the Spirit which is in addition or separate from "everything I [Jesus] have said to you".

Jesus also promises that he will leave his peace with his disciples (verse 27). This is probably another aspect of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, another description of what the Spirit gives. "Peace" here is the Jewish concept "Shalom" which is more than just emotional well being, but it is rooted in an objective peace with God, which Jesus has been telling his disciples they have in this chapter and throughout John's gospel. The command to "not let our hearts be troubled" would not make sense if Jesus was simply promising a subjective feeling. Rather, it is because of the objective reality of peace with God we already have that we can fight the subjective feelings of worry and anxiety.

In verse 28 Jesus asks his disciples to be glad he is returning to the Father, rather than being filled with sadness and anxiety. Yes, it is good for them because he goes to prepare a place for them (14:1-4), but it is also good for Jesus as he is returning to the glory that was his before his incarnation. That is how we should take the phrase “the Father is greater than I” – not that the Father is more God than Jesus, but that at this precise moment the Father is in a greater position than the Son as he is in heaven, and the Son has taken the form of a servant, emptying himself and heading to death (see Philippians 2:5-11).

Jesus’ time on this earth is limited (verse 29). His purpose is about to be fulfilled. “The prince of this world is coming”. Satan (whom God has allowed to rule in a limited way in this fallen world) is about to do his worst, but we are not to think that the cross is the devil winning. “He has no hold on me”, he will not win, and the only reason Jesus dies is because he chooses to (there is no sin of his own which means he must die). Jesus dies in obedience and love to his Father (verse 31). The cross is the greatest expression of love – but not first of us love from God to us, but of love between the Son and the Father. Jesus’ love is first of all for his Father, and the Father’s love is first of all for the Son. Our salvation is dependent on the love they have for each other. This humbles us – the gospel is first of all not about us! It also gives us greater confidence in the promises of God. If we are not brought to glory the Father will be breaking his promise not just to us, but to his Son.

Just one small point on the last sentence of this chapter “Come now; let us leave”. Don’t be distracted by it and let it detract from the teaching in the rest of the passage, but it hard to understand what is meant by “Come now let us leave”. It might be that Jesus and the disciples leave the upper room and John 15-17 is the teaching that Jesus gives on the road heading towards Gethsemane. It might be that as John Calvin suggests “Christ intended to exhort his disciples to render the same obedience to God, of which they beheld in him so illustrious an example, and not that he led them away at that moment”. The simple answer is we don’t know!

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Recap Question – How has Jesus comforted his disciples as they prepare for his coming departure?

What do we learn about the Spirit that Jesus promises in the first part of verse 26?

- *Also a bit of a recap question, but notice he is called “Holy Spirit” for the 1st time.*

In the second part of verse 26, what will the Holy Spirit do?

- Who is this a promise to initially? Why is it important to see this?
- What comfort is there to us from this promise?

From what we see in verse 26, what does the Holy Spirit teach us today?

- *Not new revelation. The words Jesus has already spoken.*

What does Jesus promise in verse 27? In the light of all we have seen so far in John 14, what kind of “peace” is he speaking about? What is our responsibility to do if we know this peace?

- *We have peace with God objectively, so we are called to watch our hearts and not be afraid.*

Why should the disciples be glad Jesus is returning to the Father (verse 28)? In what way is “the Father greater than I”?

Who does Jesus say is partly responsible for what is about to happen (verse 30)? Why will he not win?

If the devil has no hold on Jesus, why then does Jesus go to the cross (verse 31)?

Why must we know that first of all, Jesus goes to the cross out of obedience to and love for his Father?