

The Holy Spirit Testifies About Christ

Scripture: John 15:26-27

Code: 1557

INTRODUCTION

In John 15:26[en]16:15 Christ unfolds the ministries of the Holy Spirit to His disciples. That section of Scripture is part of Christ's farewell address given on the night before His crucifixion. It was a night of great sorrow for the disciples. So beginning in John 13:31 Christ comforts them.

A. John 13 -- A Promise of Abiding Love

Christ comforted the disciples by a graphic demonstration His love--He washed their feet. And because a servant is not greater than his lord, the disciples learned that they should love others through humble service.

B. John 14 -- A Promise of the Coming Spirit

Christ then told the disciples that He needed to return to His Father. However, He said they should rejoice and not be sorrowful because He would send a comforter--the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will enable the disciples to do "greater works" than Christ did when He was with them (v. 12). So then the presence of the Holy Spirit is the key to the fulfillment of Christ's promises. In John 16:14 Jesus says, "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. " The Holy Spirit's ministry is to take the promises of Christ and make them operative in the life of every Christian.

1. A guarantee of Christ's return

In John 14:3 Jesus says, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again. " He promised to return. From 2 Corinthians 5 we learn that the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of that promise: "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . Now he that hath wrought us for the very same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit" (vv. 1, 5).

The Greek word translated "earnest" (arrab[ma]on) means "down payment" or "security. " In modern Greek the word has been used to refer to an engagement ring. The Holy Spirit is our guarantee that Christ will come again and take us with Him.

2. A guarantee of spiritual power

We have already seen that Christ promised the disciples would have the ability to do mighty works (John 14:12). Acts 1:8 tells us where the power comes from, "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you. " Ephesians 3:20 says that we as Christians will be "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. " So the Holy Spirit makes Christ's promise of power a reality.

3. A guarantee of answered prayer

In John 14:13-14 Jesus says, "Whatever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. " Christ promised the disciples that He would hear and answer their prayers when they asked in His name. Romans 8 says that the Holy Spirit "maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (v. 27). So the Holy Spirit is the key to prayer.

4. A guarantee of God's presence

In John 14:18-23 Christ promises the disciples that He and God the Father will come and abide with them. Their presence is realized by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

C. John 15 -- A Promise of Increasing Opposition

Christ warned the disciples, "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (v. 19). After giving many positive promises, Christ gave a negative one that I believe is applicable to every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. The system of the world is opposed to Christ and therefore is opposed to those who follow Him. The world hates Christians because Christ lives in us. The world hates Christians because it does not know God. Being the object of the world's hatred is a good indication that we are God's children.

LESSON

John 15:26-27 says, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. " The Holy Spirit communicates truth to a hostile world through the conviction of sin and the witness of Christ. In the energy of the Holy Spirit we can boldly face the hostile world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Testify" (v. 26) and "witness" (v. 27) are legal terms. The apostle John used the imagery of a law court in this passage. The judge is the world. The prisoner is Jesus Christ. The prosecutor is Satan. The counsel for the defense is the Holy Spirit, and the witnesses are Christians, who are briefed by the defending counsel so their testimony will be potent.

A Supernatural Confrontation

Acts 17:6 says that first century believers "turned the world upside down. " The context illustrates why. Verse 4 says believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. " On the other hand verse 5 says, "The Jews who believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. " When confronted with the claims of Christ, some believe them, some ignore them, and some react with hostility. It's no different today. Likewise our need to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit remains the same.

In John 15:26-27 Christ gives us the pattern for an effective witness to a hostile world.

I. THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS TO THE WORLD

Verses 26-27 are embedded in a section detailing the hostility of the world. Verse 18 talks about the world. Verses 19 through 25 address the world. The first few verses of chapter 16 deal with the hateful world. So the context before and after our passage speaks of the world's hatred. It is the world that is the object of our witness. Some people give testimony of Christ only to other Christians. They've never confronted the world. Yet Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). Obviously He meant for us to confront the world with the gospel. A. Being Separate from the World's System

To confront the world effectively we must be separated from its system. We can't confront the world if we are absorbed in it. James says, "Whosoever, . . . will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (4:4). John says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

Until the day when the world passes away (1 John 2:17) it will remain the enemy of Jesus Christ because it is controlled by Satan (1 John 5:19). The evil system of the world has been designed by Satan to destroy Christ. That has been his goal from the time of his fall to when he will be cast into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:10) He manipulates the world in sin in an attempt to achieve his objective, that is why we're to hate the world. Now that doesn't mean we're not to love the people in the world. What we're called to do is to confront the world with its sin.

B. Confronting the World's Sin

So even though we must be separated from that which is controlled by Satan, we must not withdraw from the world completely. Rather we must confront the world as the disciples did. Such confrontation will bring persecution upon us. But we must not retreat because of it. Rather we should face it, counting it a great honor to share the sufferings of Christ. If they hated Him, they'll hate us. The world is set against Christianity.

II. THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS OF THE SON

Jesus Christ is the content of the Christian witness. We must not accommodate our message to the world like so many people have done. Rather we must proclaim the offense of the cross, which is the Person and work of Christ.

A. The Standards of Witnessing

1. We must be exact

The apostle Paul said, "There are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:7-9). We must present Christ accurately.

2. We must exalt Christ

God desires that we confront the world with a testimony about Christ--not ourselves. In the right context it is proper to share with someone what Christ has done in our lives. Paul did that. But our testimony must be given in a way that turns the attention back on Christ. People must know who Christ is and that who we are is secondary.

B. A Survey of Witnessing

The testimony of the true church throughout history has been Jesus Christ. John said the purpose of the book of Revelation was to bear "witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:2). In chapter 12 he says all believers are characterized by the "testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 17). In chapter 19 he adds, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (v. 10).

1. In the Old Testament

Old Testament writers focused on the coming Christ, although at times they did not fully understand their own prophecies. First Peter 1 says, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (vv. 10-11). Clearly Christ was the central theme of their prophecies.

2. In the New Testament

Jesus said, "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). So in the New Testament we find Christ instructing the disciples to give witness about Him.

If our witnessing is truly empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christ will be the subject of our testimony. As Christ says in John 16:14, "He [the Holy Spirit] shall glorify me. "

III. THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS FROM THE FATHER

Two times in John 15:26 Christ indicates that the Holy Spirit comes from the Father: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (emphasis added). The witness of the Holy Spirit originated with the Father.

The Mystery of the Trinity

This verse implicitly teaches us about the Trinity. The Son is talking, the Spirit is being sent, and the Father is planning the mission. But the exact nature of the relationship among the members of the Trinity is a mystery to us. For example, in John 14:16 Christ says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter. " Verse 26 says, "The Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name. " In the first verse it seems as though it is Christ's intention to send the Spirit and in the second verse it seems as though it is the others intention. Many times the inter-working of the Trinity is beyond our ability to understand. I don't understand the Trinity. But I do know from Scripture that in a sense both the Son and the Father sent the Holy Spirit.

A desire to specify the Trinity beyond what we know from the Word of God will lead to serious theological error. Modalistic monarchianism is one such an instance. It asserts that God exists in only

one person or mode at any given time. First God was the Father, next God was the Son, and last God was the Holy Spirit. However Scripture does not allow for such an understanding of God. In fact, John 15:26 has the members of the Trinity interacting with one another. So they must exist in separate Persons at the same time, yet somehow be one (Deut. 6:4).

A. The Status of the Holy Spirit's Witness

Jesus emphasized that the Spirit would be sent from the Father to the disciples. They knew that Christ came from the Father and would be going back to the Father. Christ also emphasized that the Holy Spirit is equal to Himself. In John 14:16 Christ says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter. " The Greek word translated "another" (allos) refers to another of the same kind. The Holy Spirit is fully God. So since the Holy Spirit is God and has been with God from all eternity, He is a qualified witness.

B. The Start of the Holy Spirit's Witness

When did the Holy Spirit come as a witness of Jesus Christ? Christ promised the disciples, "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). That promise was fulfilled on the day of the Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff). So the Holy Spirit came from the Father at Pentecost to witness to the Son. The Spirit witnesses to the Son by indwelling believers.

C. The Specifics of the Holy Spirit's Witness

1. It's Through the prophets of God

Jesus says in John 5:39, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. " "Scriptures" refer to the books of the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament, the Father was testifying to Jesus Christ. In fact, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, [Christ] expounded unto [two of His disciples], in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

2. It's Through the works of Christ

Jesus said, "I have greater witness than that of John ,[the Baptist]; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (John 5:36). Through the works that Jesus did, the Father was giving testimony. Again Christ says, "I told you and ye believed not; the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of me" (John 10:25). The works that He did were the Father's testimony.

3. It's Through the affirmation of the Father

Several times God gave testimony to Jesus by direct statement. In Matthew 3:17 He says, "This is my beloved Son. " Matthew goes a step further: "This my beloved Son . . . hear Him. "

The passion of the Father is to bring men the testimony of Jesus. If we are to bear fruitful witness to the world--to proclaim the testimony of Jesus to the world--we must have a Bible in our hands for that is where we read the Father's testimony to the Son. And certainly there is no way we could enhance the testimony of the Father to the Son. The Word of God then is the key to our witness.

IV. THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS THROUGH THE SPIRIT

The Father's testimony is born to the world by the Holy Spirit.

A. Acts 2:32-33

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. " The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost made witnessing possible.

B. Acts 5:29-32

"Peter and the other apostles answered, and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him. " The apostles saw their witness in connection with the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit's witness is always concerned with presenting Jesus Christ.

C. Acts 4:31

"When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. " The natural result of being filled with the Spirit is witnessing. Notice that the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. That's because He never tells anything but the truth. He is the perfect witness. He not only leads men to truth but also is truth in essence. In John 16:14-15 Jesus says, "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. " The Spirit dispenses the truth of Christ to every believer.

D. 1 John 5:6

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. " Since the Spirit is truth, He must bear witness to Christ because Christ is truth (John 14:6).

All Filled Up with No Place to Go?

There's no such thing as a Spirit-filled Christian who doesn't witness. That's because it's the Spirit's ministry to testify about Christ. Spirit-filled people confront the world because that's what the Spirit directs them to do. Hebrews 2:4 says of the apostles that God bore "them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. " They were given supernatural gifts by the Holy Spirit so they could dispense the gospel.

In Romans 15:19 Paul says, "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. " The filling of the Holy Spirit enabled Paul to preach the gospel of Christ. And the Holy Spirit continues to empower God's people to tell of God's Son.

V. THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS IN THE BELIEVER

The Christian witness is of the Son, from the Father through the Spirit, and in the believer. You're the last link in the whole chain of witness. Unlike Jesus, the Holy Spirit has not chosen to physically manifest Himself in a human body. Rather the Holy Spirit embodies the church--the Body of Christ now present on earth. Ephesians 2:22 says of the church, "Ye . . . are built together for an habitation of the Spirit. " It is through us that God wants to witness to the world. We are the last link in God's plan to reach the world.

The Essence of Our Testimony

In John 15:27 Christ gives an important qualification for being a witness: "Ye have been with me from the beginning. " What is it that makes a witness legitimate? He has to have seen what happened. You can't go into a court and be a witness unless you saw what happened. I once saw an attempted murder. That qualified me as a witness to that incident. So I went to court and gave my testimony. The only person who can give a testimony is someone who has experienced something. That takes our testimony of Jesus out of a cold, factual realm into the warmth of personal experience. But the

testimony itself is not our personal experience. That's the motive for our testimony. It may elucidate our testimony. But the testimony itself is Jesus Christ and His work on the cross.

We are the final step in the witnessing process. How tragic it would be if the witness of Christ broke down because of us. Romans says, "How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (10:14-15, 17). In His sovereignty, God has designed Christians to be the channels that the Holy Spirit uses to give witness of Christ.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the context of Christ's discussion on the Holy Spirit's ministries in John 15:26--16:15?
2. The Holy Spirit's ministry is to take the _____ of _____ and make them _____ in the like of every Christian.
3. Identify the "power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20).
4. Why does Christ promise to answer our prayers (John 14:13-14)?
5. Give one condition to answered prayer (John 14:13-14)?
6. What negative promise did Christ give to His disciples (John 15:19)?
7. Explain the legal imagery of John 15:26-27.
8. Who is the object of the Christian's witness according to the context of our passage.
9. Why is the world an enemy of God (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17)?
10. What judgment awaits those who pervert the gospel (Gal. 1:7-9)?
11. Did Old Testament prophets know about and speak of Christ? Explain (1 Pet. 1:10-11).
12. How does John 15:26-27 contradict heresies about the Trinity such as modalistic monarchianism?

13. How does the Greek term translated "another" in John 14:16 support the deity of the Holy Spirit?
14. When was Christ's promise recorded in Acts 1:8 fulfilled (Acts 2:1ff)?
15. What must we take in hand when we confront the world with the testimony of Jesus Christ?
16. What is the relationship between being Spirit-filled and giving testimony about Christ?
17. What is an important qualification of being a witness (John 15:27)?

Pondering the Principles

1. It has been said that the finger that points out the path we must walk is connected to the hand that upholds us. Christ promises to be with us as we pursue godly living in a hostile world. In Matthew 28:28 He assures us, saying, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. " Have you retreated from the task of confronting the world because of opposition? Possibly a lack of understanding the Holy Spirit's ministries is the cause. Know that the Comforter is here. He desires to use your life to testify of Christ. But spiritual power is directly dependent upon time spent with Christ. Our Lord told the disciples, "Ye . . . shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:27, emphasis added). Sometimes the simplest principles are the ones we overlook--we need to spend time exposing our hearts to the Lord through prayer and the study of His Word on a regular basis. Commit yourself to a specific time of prayer and Bible study, and be sure to stick to it.
2. This lesson has brought into focus our responsibility to testify of Christ. To do that God has given His Spirit to us. However, one responsibility we do not have is to save men from their sins. The results of the gospel must be left in the hands of God. So the question is, Are you faithful to witness? not, Are you winning people to Christ?
3. Man's greatest need is forgiveness. Christianity is a religion based on forgiveness. However forgiveness presupposes a debt that must be canceled. That debt is caused by sin. So a clear presentation of the gospel must include the fact that sin has destroyed man's relationship with God. A faithful witness must confront sin. So the next time you share the gospel with someone, make sure he knows he's lost before you tell him the good news that he can be saved. That's the only way anyone can appreciate the value of salvation.

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