

The Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life – John 15:26 – 16:15

Introduction – Pentecost is the celebration of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the church (Acts 2). Jesus said that He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly; and He does this by means of sending the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:6). According to the Nicene Creed, the Holy Spirit is a Person to be worshipped for He is the Lord and Giver of Life. And yet one of the important characteristics of the Holy Spirit brought forth in our passage is that He draws attention, not *to* Himself, but *away* from Himself. He is the Spirit of Humility and this teaches us much about what the Holy Spirit does in and through us.

Overview – Jesus says that He will send the Helper from the Father, that He is the Spirit of Truth and that He will testify of Jesus (v16), making disciples who will do the same (v17). Jesus then warns them, though not to stumble them, that they too will be persecuted when He departs, thinking that they are serving God (or Truth) while proving that in fact they have not known the Father or the Son (16:1-4). It is to their advantage that Jesus go (that is, through His substitutionary death, His justifying resurrection, and His enthroning ascension), but that having departed, He will send the Holy Spirit (vv5-7). The Spirit will convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment (vv8-11). There are things they could not bear before Jesus had gone (v12), but after the Spirit of truth is given (which happened at Pentecost), He would guide the disciples into “*all truth*” (v13). But notice what this means, “*for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak.*” He is a prophetic Spirit (v13b). And all of this will be to glorify Christ, for He will only pass on what Christ has given (v14), which are all the things of the Father (v15).

The Spirit Gives Himself – When we talk of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the conversation often goes to the gifts and fruit of the Spirit, which is fine. But what the Spirit gives is not some abstract thing. He does not extend to us raw abilities, squeeze out some “Holy Spirit-juice” or some “thing” called “grace.” The Spirit gives us His very self and there is the life, the grace, the fellowship, the love, and the enjoyment of the Father, Son and Spirit. Jonathan Edwards even posited that the “grace and peace” that Paul so often blesses from the Father and the Son in his epistles is “shorthand” for the Holy Spirit Himself. Paul teaches us that “*the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*” (Rom 5:5). But that “*love*” is not a sitting, abstract feeling. It is the love of the Father for His Son and the Son for His Father – a love we are brought into and participate in by the Holy Spirit. We now love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). We now love our brothers and sisters in Christ because the Father loves His children and His Spirit is in us.

The Spirit Reveals Jesus – There is a way of not talking about the Spirit that much (especially in comparison with the Father and Christ) that is altogether consistent with having the Spirit. When He comes, He doesn’t talk about Himself, He testifies of Jesus (John 15:26) and causes us to do the same (v27). He only speaks of what Christ has given Him and seeks to glorify Christ (16:13-14). When our thoughts are on Christ, the Spirit is doing His work (Rev 19:10). He is the spirit of wisdom and revelation, giving the knowledge of the Father and the Son, and the power which raised Christ from the dead given to us (Eph 1:17-23). Jesus says that He is the only Way to the Father (John 14:6) and Paul teaches us “*For through Him (Jesus) we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit to the Father*” (Eph 2:18). We access the Way by means of the Spirit in order to get to the Father. The Spirit shows us the supremacy of Christ. The Spirit quickens us to love Christ. The Spirit empowers us to love with the love of Christ. The Spirit brings us into the communion already enjoyed between the Father and the Son. The Spirit is our new eyes to see, but new eyes don’t look at themselves; new eyes that can see look away. And what do they see? Christ.

The Spirit Re-orientes Us – The Spirit does not draw attention to Himself and so it can be said that the Spirit is the Humility of God. And as He dwells in us, He works this characteristic in us. The gifts of the Spirit given to you are not for you; they are for the edification of the body (Eph 4:12). The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) works out in us because the Spirit is in us, but they are not for us. They describe the good works that we now are able to do unto God and others. “*Where the Spirit is, there it is always summer...for there...are always good fruits, that is to say, good works*” – William Tyndale.

The fruit of the Spirit is very much like its Giver. It is not just that love, joy, peace, are hanging on us, making us have feelings of love, joy or peace (and quite full of ourselves because we notice that we have these wonderful feelings). This fruit re-orientes us away from ourselves. We love God. We love our neighbor. We rejoice in Christ. We rejoice over, with, and for others. We have peace with God and we are the peacemakers of the world.

And in Your Sanctification – Think of it this way. A new Person now resides in you and you in Him. You therefore are already sanctified – and you hardly notice yourself for your orientation is to Christ. Now, in this new fellowship, He begins the work of putting off and putting on – and so do you. You put off pride and put on humility. You put off envy/lust and put on contentment. You put off fleshly anger and put on gentleness. You put off lying and put on the truth in love. And you keep changing in this way because there is Someone changing you from within. Happy Pentecost.