

The Witness of The Spirit (Part 1 of 3)

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[0 : 0 0] living God we thank you for enabling John to remember what the Lord Jesus said that night and for faithfully writing it down for us and I pray now that you would help us enter into the reality these words speak as never before for we pray it in Jesus name Amen I want to talk to you today about a friend of mine I've known him for a long time now decades but over the past few years and especially since accepting the call to come and serve with you in the heart of the city he has become all the more precious to me I now know that I cannot live without him

I cannot imagine life without him I do not want to live without him I am of course speaking about the person Jesus is speaking about in the text we just read I'm speaking about the one Jesus calls the paraclete I'm speaking about the Holy Spirit he has become very precious to me as I know he is to many of you let us review the context in which Jesus first told his disciples about my friend and your friend it was on the night he went before the cross to the cross Jesus had gathered his first community of followers together for a meal for the Jewish Passover meal during the meal he took a loaf of bread gave thanks broke it and then served it to his disciples saying this is my body given for you eat this in remembrance of me then he took a cup of wine gave thanks handed it to his disciples saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood drink of it all of you in remembrance of me and then he told them what was initially devastating news in a little while

I am going away he had come from the father as he put it and now he was going back to the father I am going away and for the rest of the evening Jesus went on to prepare the first group of followers and us to go on living in the absence of his physical presence not in his absence as we have come to see over the last few weeks but in the absence of his physical presence what caught them by even greater surprise was that Jesus claimed his going away was to their advantage how can that be?

how can it be to their advantage and our advantage that Jesus go away that we go on living in the absence of his physical presence because says Jesus if I go away I will send the paraclete to you I will send the Holy Spirit to you I will send the helper to you I will send the comforter to you I will send the advocate to you who says Jesus will live with us and who says Jesus will live in us as a result of the paraclete coming to live with us and in us we will not be alone in the absence of Jesus physical presence over the past few Sundays since Easter Sunday actually we have been exploring what I have been calling the space in which Jesus now calls us to follow obviously this space is filled with oxygen and hydrogen and nitrogen it's filled with plants and animals and insects and all kinds of microorganisms it's filled with automobiles and airplanes and skyscrapers it's filled with microwave radiation and all kinds of electrical signals it's filled with principalities and powers as the New Testament calls them it's filled with people from all over the world it's filled with responsibilities and demands it's filled with rival world views and ideologies conflicting visions of what it means to be human and it is filled with a person the space is filled with a person a friend my friend and your friend the precious paraclete so what is he doing in this space he's with us and he's in us imagine that in us what is he doing with us and in us

I pointed out a couple of weeks ago that what he is doing is a function of the two titles Jesus gives him in the upper room the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Truth Holy Spirit he comes to holy-fy us he comes to make us like the one who sent him like Jesus the Holy One that is what the writers of the rest of the New Testament emphasize when the Holy Spirit comes he comes and begins to change us to make us more holy do not be afraid of the word holy yes the word conveys the idea of purity to be made holy is to be made pure but the word also conveys the idea of wholeness to be made holy is to be made whole who would not want to be made whole what the rest of the New Testament emphasizes is that when the paraclete comes he goes to work with us and in us to make us like the one truly whole person who ever lived like Jesus of Nazareth who would not like to become like him so the apostle

[7 : 23] Paul in his letter to the Galatians speaks of the fruit of the Spirit the kind of character traits that began to emerge in us because the Spirit is living in us they are the character traits of Jesus himself love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self-control oh paraclete bring it on reproduce the character of Jesus in us and the Spirit of truth the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who says Jesus will guide you into all the truth a tremendous promise we are not left to find out the truth on our own we are not left to figure out the truth on our own boy this promise means to me so much to me right now

I often feel overwhelmed by the challenge of doing ministry at this time in history how do we communicate the gospel in our time in this city with all the conflicting truth claims and how do I now help the church move forward where are we to put our emphasis what are to be our priorities you in your businesses and responsibilities are asking similar questions how can I know what is really going on in my context how can I know the right path to take oh blessed paraclete he will guide you into all the truth says Jesus he will guide you on the path that leads to life on that night before he gave himself for the life of the world

Jesus made four specific promises about the truth work of the paraclete and fulfilling those promises is what is happening in this space in which we are called to follow John 16 verse 14 he the paraclete shall take of mine and shall disclose it to you Jesus Jesus repeats this promise in the next verse John 16 verse 15 all things that the father has are mine therefore I said that he the paraclete will take of mine and will disclose it to you disclose earlier in the upper room Jesus had told his disciples I will disclose myself to you I will make myself known to you I will make myself real to you how asked the disciples through this work of the spirit of truth says Jesus just as

Jesus came and disclosed the father to us so the spirit comes and discloses Jesus to us what a promise we are not left to figure out who Jesus is on our own which we would have never been able to do and which we would have likely gotten wrong you see the great passion of the paraclete is Jesus simple as that nowhere do we find the spirit telling us about himself someone has called the holy spirit the shy member of the trinity never calling attention to himself not because he is in fact shy but because he is preoccupied with Jesus simple as that the spirit knows

Jesus the spirit loves Jesus and it is his passionate desire that we know Jesus and that we love Jesus when the holy spirit gets hold of us we too will be preoccupied with Jesus it is so fun to to see to see this in so many of your lives a number of you have said to me lately I simply cannot get enough of Jesus that is the clearest sign that the holy spirit has come yes the spirit comes and gives gifts of healing and deliverance and miracles but the biggest sign that he has come and is at work is that busy tired confused men and women become preoccupied with Jesus how does he make this happen consider the second promise

[12 : 49] Jesus makes about his work John 14 verse 26 he will bring to your remembrance all that I said to you in the absence of Jesus physical presence the paraclete will help disciples remember what Jesus said wonderful promise he will help disciples remember all that Jesus said boy I am having a horrible time remembering names I meet people in so many different venues and I can't remember names that I will remember what Jesus said can it really be yes the paraclete who loves Jesus and wants us to love Jesus will see to it that we remember all that he said to us now I agree that with those who see that this promise is primarily fulfilled in the writing of the four gospels the spirit of truth help the eyewitnesses remember all that

Jesus taught and then help the eyewitnesses pass on what they remembered the upper room discourse John 13 to 17 is itself a fulfillment of promise the spirit of truth help John remember all Jesus taught that night the same is true of the other discourses the other speeches of Jesus in John the discourse on the bread of life in John 6 the discourse on the good shepherd in John 10 fulfillment of promise so are all the great parables in Luke the parable of the prodigal father in Luke 15 the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10 fulfillment of promise so the parables in Matthew 13 the parable of the sower the parable of the mustard seed in leaven and in Matthew 5 to 7 Jesus sermon on the mount where would the world be without Jesus sermon on the mount a fulfillment of promise and on it goes the parable will help disciples remember how does he do it

I do not know I do know that in the first century and in the middle eastern context of the first century that would not be as difficult as it seems in our century the disciples grew up in an oral culture where people listened more carefully and had an amazing capacity for retaining information indeed in that oral culture one only knows if one remembers one of the rites of passage for a male in that day was to one night sit around a fire with the village elders and recount the history of the village in the words and phrases and images of the elders and the elders before them I saw the dynamics of oral culture at work in the Philippines one Sunday I was preaching on that great hymn to

Jesus Christ in Philippians 2 5 to 11 three young university students were sitting in the front row and they were obviously excited about what they were hearing about Jesus but they weren't taking notes and I thought to myself guys this is good stuff you ought to be writing it down and about three weeks later I was in the market and I heard one of them his name is Sid Kahlo I remember his name he said to me you know in your sermon on the hymn about Jesus in your third point you went on to say and he quoted me exactly for three sentences so the writers of the four gospels they lived in an oral culture they lived by memory now I do not want in any way to minimize the supernatural work of the spirit it's just that in such a cultural context bringing to remembrance is easy for me to conceive how the spirit did it I do not know but that it can happen

I can easily embrace so when you pick up a copy of the gospel according to John you are reading the gospel according to the paraclete through John when you pick up a copy of the gospel of Luke you are reading the gospel according to the paraclete through Luke this explains why we have those times when the bible sitting on the shelf seems to cry out pick me up it is the spirit himself wanting to bring to our remembrance the things that Jesus said he did that for me just the other day the paraclete seemed to want to bring to my remembrance the prayer

[18 : 19] Jesus prays in John 17 and I was taken by the fact you did this at the beginning of the service Bob I didn't know you were going to do it the paraclete seemed to want me to rest again in the prayers that Jesus is praying it was as if the spirit was saying to me Daryl remember what Jesus is praying for the people of first remember what he's praying for your family remember what he's praying for you father keep them in your name father keep them from the evil one father I want them to be with me where I am that they may behold my glory the spirit of truth will bring to your remembrance all that I have said all I have preached and prayed this leads to the third promise Jesus makes about the spirit John 14 verse 26 he will teach you all things to what does this refer in the upper room

Jesus says a number of times I have many more things to say to you but you cannot bear them now the implication being that a time would come when they could bear the more the implication being that a time would come when the more would be spoken I agree with those who see this promise primarily fulfilled in the writing of the letters of the New Testament fulfilled in the promises in the letters of Paul and Peter and John and Jude and the letter to the Hebrews what Jesus could not teach the disciples in the upper room before going back to the father he taught after going to the father through the teaching ministry of the paraclete he will teach you all things I take this to mean that the spirit would enable disciples to begin to understand the implications of the events involved in

Jesus going to the father for Jesus to go to the father it involved crucifixion resurrection and ascension and Jesus did not teach the implications of those events before the events because the disciples would not have been able to understand them the events had to happen first and after they happened the paraclete the spirit of truth could begin to unpack the truly cosmic implications of Jesus dying and rising and ascending so every time we open one of the new testament letters and read we are reading the work of the spirit of truth which explains why these words feel like they live yes the letters are the work of human writers Paul Peter John but they are also primarily the work of the resident teacher who lives with us and in us

Jesus through the spirit is teaching us what he could not teach us before dying and rising and ascending to the throne so when we read the letter of Paul to the Romans we are reading the letter of the paraclete to the Romans through Paul when we read the letter of Peter to those scattered throughout Asia Minor we're reading the letter of the paraclete to those scattered throughout Asia Minor and that's why when we read the New Testament letters we experience what we do they have been breathed by the very breath of God the same spirit who hovered over the waters and brought the world into being the same spirit who in Nazareth overshadowed the womb of the virgin and brought the God man into being that same spirit worked with broken human beings like Paul and Peter and John and brought into being these letters that have changed the course of history

I still remember the night that I first read through the epistle to the Ephesians at one sitting I came home weary and despairing and I felt pulled by this letter so I sat down on the couch and read the whole thing through in one sitting by the time I finished I was on my knees and tears of joy flowing from me freshly overcome by the massively grand purposes of God that emerge out of his generous grace blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every blessing of the spirit in Christ says Paul over this last year I found myself pulled to the epistle to the Hebrews and each time I spend time in it I'm stunned again by the implications of

[23 : 39] Jesus cross and I find myself being washed of shame and guilt and I find myself being invigorated to keep going right now for some reason I'm being drawn to the apostle Paul's passionate letter to the Galatians who who has bewitched you he asked them this is the only thing I want to find out from you did you receive the spirit by works of law or with hearing of faith are you so foolish having begun by the spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh having begun the adventure of discipleship by the Holy Spirit giving you life in Jesus are you now going on to live by trusting yourself to make you holy and whole walk by the spirit says Paul or more to the point walk by the spirit says the spirit walk by my power and my wisdom says the spirit of power and wisdom what a friend we have in the paraclete and one more ministry

Jesus promises us verse 16 verse sorry John 16 verse 13 and he will disclose what is to come the paraclete will open the future to us now Jesus did some of this before teaching in the upper room as he sat on the Mount of Olives he gave his great discourse recorded in Matthew 24 and 25 but apparently there was more to disclose there was more to teach about the nature of the future and he promises in the absence of his physical presence that the paraclete would open up that more I agree with those who see this promise primarily fulfilled in giving John the experience he had on the island of Patmos the experience he then records for us in this creatively brilliant document we call the revelation of

Jesus Christ as we read the last book of the Bible we are reading the disclosing work of the paraclete which is why it has such a powerful effect on the human imagination it is not just the product of a human being writing his wish dreams on the screen of our brain and heart it's the product of the paraclete working with and in John giving him this vision and enabling him to write it out indeed in this case John explicitly says the vision comes from the spirit from the one who is and was and is to come from Jesus Christ the firstborn of the dead ruler of the kings of the earth and from the seven spirits of God says John that's John's way of reminding us of the perfection of the spirit the number seven being the number of completion yes it is

John who picks up the pen and with it paints this vision of the coming future of the coming new heaven and new earth but as John paints the spirit of truth paints the book begins with Jesus saying seven times hear what the spirit says to the churches and the book ends with the spirit along with the churches crying out to Jesus come the spirit knows what the future holds a new city where there is no longer any death and the spirit wants the city to come in his love for Jesus and in his love for us he longs for Jesus to come with that city he will disclose to you what is to come because he knows that if we know what is to come it will change the way we live in the present Eugene

Peterson puts it this way for if the future is dominated by the coming again of Jesus there is little room on the screen for projecting our anxieties and fantasies isn't that good if the future is dominated by the coming again of Jesus there's little room left on the screen for projecting our anxieties and fantasies the paraclete wants us to look out on the horizon of the future and see the coming of the only one who can put it all together again as he also wants us to be able to look in the past and see the only one who forgives our sins and heals our hurts and redeems our failures and as he wants us to look around in the present and see the only one who gives us life who can make us more holy and whole so are we surprised that the paraclete likes to draw us to the

[29 : 02] Lord's supper it is here where he discloses Jesus again this event is all about Jesus it's here where we see Jesus in the past lifted up on the cross it's here where we see Jesus in the future coming to make all things new and it is here where we see Jesus once again giving himself to us as the bread of life and living water what a friend what a precious precious friend filling the space where we are called to follow and to earth for to just a little Either He was a