

The Spirit of Truth

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 May 2025

Preacher: Bill Dunlop

[0 : 0 0] In the days before capital punishment was abolished in our country, the press and the public seemed to hunger for details of what happened in the person to be executed immediately before their execution. So we would hear what they said to their loved ones who met with them the night before. If they asked for a minister or a priest, we would hear about that conversation. We'd even hear about what they had for their last meal. It was all rather ghoulish.

Well now, we're dealing here with someone who is due to be executed. And we're given in chapters 14 to 16 something wonderfully precious that he passed on to his disciples.

And I want us to look particularly at John 16, 12 to 15 to see these last words of a man on death row and to see what he passed on to his close friends.

They're sometimes called a farewell discourse. And certainly we're told that he was going to the father. But actually, a lot of what he said is not about him going from them, but about him coming to them.

I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Chapter 14. And then again, where we read earlier, I'm going away, but I will come to you. 14 and 28.

[1 : 5 8] And so it is that Jesus, in these words in the upper room, is telling them about his coming again.

A coming that was fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit right into their community in power on the day of Pentecost.

And the things that he said to us are wonderfully helpful. Things that he said to them, rather, that what the Spirit would do when he comes.

Chapter 14 and verse 25 of 26. The helper, the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name.

He will teach you all things. He will bring to your remembrance what I've said. And into chapter 15, we hear more of what the Spirit will do.

[3 : 0 2] Verse 26. He will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness because you've been with me from the beginning.

On to chapter 16 and verse 13. The Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth.

Whatever he hears, he will speak. And then, verse 13, he will declare to you the things that are to come. And he will glorify me, taking what is mine and declaring it to you.

Individually, we have all, if we're in Christ, have benefited from these things. The Spirit has guided us into the truth.

He has taught us. He has glorified the Lord Jesus in our lives. He's declared what he's received from him.

[4 : 1 5] And that has happened to us, and it continues to happen to us, in Christ. But if you see these verses as simply talking about your direct relationship with the Holy Spirit, you actually miss something that is key to all these pieces of instruction that Jesus gave the disciples.

Because he was speaking to the disciples as very particularly the people who'd been with him from the beginning.

Chapter 15, verse 27. He's speaking to these peoples, these close followers. And it's because they had gone with Jesus through his public ministry, that they then have a unique role in the church that was to be formed.

They would bear witness, verse 26 of chapter 15, about him. You also shall be my witnesses.

And they would bear witness because the Spirit himself had bore witness. And so, you see, what we're hearing here is that the teaching of the apostles in due course was to be a joint teaching.

[5 : 57] The Spirit will bear witness. The Spirit will bear witness. And you will bear witness. And in this wonderful amalgam that we have in the apostolic teaching, we have God speaking to his people in a unique way.

The Spirit will bear witness, and you will bear witness. And that is essential to our understanding of apostolic teaching.

The apostolic teaching that has been inscripturated. It has been given to us in Holy Scripture, as well as in the preaching of the gospel in the early church.

And what we have in this upper room discourse is Jesus preparing the eleven, though we're eleven at that point, preparing the eleven and their circle of apostles to be the spokesman to the church down through the ages.

Other writings of the New Testament explain how this would take place. Paul speaks about it as Scripture being breathed into the writers.

[7 : 25] All Scripture is God-breathed and is suitable for teaching and training in righteousness. Peter put it a different way.

He says, New Scripture came by interpretation of men, but men moved by the Spirit, moved by the Spirit, spoke from God.

So when we come to the apostles' teaching, we come to that which the Spirit gave them, which the Spirit gave them on the instruction of the Lord Jesus in the upper room.

Well, all that by way of lengthy introduction to what I want us to see from John 16 and verses 13, 14, and 15.

And I'd like to single out three things about the Word of God that the Spirit gave to the apostles. First of all, the Word of God is true.

[8 : 41] When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. The Spirit of truth always speaks what is true.

Now, it's significant that Jesus had described Himself as the truth. I'm the way, the truth, and the life. But here, He's telling us that the Spirit is also the Spirit of truth.

He is trustworthy. His promises are never broken. And what He gives us as the Spirit of truth is the outflow from the character of God.

You see, if God is true and trustworthy, what His Spirit says is bound to be true and trustworthy. It will be consistent, self-consistent, without internal contradictions, because that's the character of God.

it will be true truth. And so we can say, if God is true, His Word will be true.

[10 : 11] If God is accurate, His Word will be infallibly accurate. And that's our understanding of Holy Scripture.

Wonderfully reliable, inerrantly faithful. God's Word to us, His people. The second thing we learn from these verses in John 16, and again in verse 13, He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak.

And there we're seeing that the teaching of the apostles given by the Spirit is authoritative. He will not speak on His own authority, meaning, He will not simply be voicing what He Himself has conjured up, but He will be passing on what Jesus has given Him.

He will declare whatever He hears. Verse 13, same verse. So it was that when the Spirit spoke to the apostles in the days after Pentecost, He gave them an inbuilt God-given authority in their teaching.

He enabled them to recall the things that Jesus had said to them throughout His life. He enabled them to understand what was going to happen in the future down through the years of this age of the kingdom.

[12 : 12] He was the Spirit who authoritatively taught them. He taught them because He taught them what Jesus gave Him. If Scripture is God-breathed and it comes about through the Spirit moving its writers, then it has Jesus' authority.

It actually has Trinitarian authority because Jesus Himself had spoken what the Father had given Him. So you see this chain. What the Father spoke to the Son, the Son spoke to the people.

But what the Son gave to the Spirit, the Spirit passed on to the apostles. And the apostolic teaching has the authority, the imprimatur of the Trinity.

Now, down through the centuries, there's actually been three places, three loci of authority that have vied for the church's attention and approval.

There's been the Bible itself. There's been the decisions of the church through its councils, its creeds, its confessions, and the decisions of its courts.

[13:47] And there's been thirdly, and this has come to the fore, especially in the last 400 years, or 300 years, there has been the reasoning of intelligent human beings.

things. The 17th century saw the emergence of the age of reason, where men's thinking became the measure of all things.

And so it is that human thinking has become the authority behind many decisions of the church. Now, the church is hugely beneficial in establishing the teachings that we have.

Paul describes it as the pillar and buttress of the truth. And it is there to endorse and back up apostolic teaching, but never to overtake it.

We bring all our decision-making to the word of God. Similarly with our human ingenuity.

[15:08] Yes, we've been given by God intelligent minds to search things out, and we bring our minds to bear on the truths of Scripture.

But our minds must never override what we've been given here. How important that is.

And we want to urge ourselves, to urge our leaders, to urge those who are training for ministry to truly take this on board.

Because the church will come under attack on this battlefield in every generation.

That is for sure. And we need leaders who will not flinch on the authority of Holy Scripture.

[16:10] 51 years ago, at an enormous convention of leaders, especially of missionary leaders, who gathered together in the city of Lausanne in Switzerland, opportunity was given to a man called Francis Schaeffer to speak.

And he came with one paper that he'd written in which he says these words. these are hard days ahead of us for ourselves and for our children.

Holding to a strong view of Scripture or not holding to it is the watershed of the evangelical world. Those who under God's hand have leadership must have courage to draw a line. That's a line concerning the truth of the Bible. And to do it publicly.

If we don't, we cut the ground for under the feet of our children. Now, those words were regarded as prophetic in 1974 and I put it to you that they are still supremely relevant to us.

[17:38] If you go to certain mountain ridges, you'll find that the rain falls on one side and flows out in one direction and on the other side, it flows in another direction.

And they may end up in different oceans, different waters. others. And what Schaeffer's saying is that if we are not committed to this firm view of Holy Scripture, the decisions that Christians arrive at will be oceans apart.

the word of God from the Spirit of God is true and it's authoritative.

And then thirdly, I want to see from John 16 that the teaching to the apostles from the Spirit brings Christ to us.

Verse 14, He, the Spirit, will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine, therefore I said he'll take what is mine and declare it to you.

[19:07] The scriptures are all about Jesus. The apostles said we don't preach ourselves, we preach Jesus Christ as Lord and it's the same in their writings.

It doesn't preach and teach the apostles. it teaches Jesus Christ as Lord. And when we come to this book, what we're wanting is to come and there find the Lord Jesus Christ.

To find more than just teaching about him or doctrinal assertions, important those they may be.

We come here because here is where Christ is glorified. Now, there are people who may say about us, you're too preoccupied with the word.

they say we worship the word that became flesh and dwelt among us.

[20:28] We worship the living word. We worship Christ. God has spoken to us through him. We don't want to get into the trap of worshipping a book and of becoming bibliolators.

Now, we do not want to become worshippers of a book. That is indeed wrong.

But what we've discovered that we find in the pages of these 66 books that make up Holy Scripture that Christ emerges and we find him.

And just as Jesus draw near to Cleopas and his friend on the way to Emmaus and explain to them the truths about Christ from the law and the prophets, so it is that the spirit of Jesus comes near to us in Holy Scripture and teaches us the things about Christ and we find him, we enjoy him when we come into this book.

And that's why we want to say to each other, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

[21 : 52] Come and take it in and find its treasure and what it's worth. Now can I speak to maybe two groups of people as we close?

Are you listening in? maybe you haven't yet believed, you haven't found faith in Jesus Christ and you're here because you're distinctly interested, you want to see Jesus rather like some Greeks who came to Jesus a few chapters earlier and they asked Philip, sir, could we see Jesus?

Not just to see him looking at his face, but to see him, we'd like to get to know him. And if you're like that, what I want to say to you is, yes, come to the worshippers, come and join in public worship, that is so, so rich for you.

but especially come and take in what is here, because here in the word, you will find Jesus Christ. Jesus called it like seed that is dropped into a person's heart, the word is. And that seed is going into your heart as you listen.

[23 : 30] And Peter said about his readers, you've been born again, not with a perishable seed, but with a seed that doesn't perish, doesn't break into pieces, and it's the imperishable seed of the word of God.

Christ. And when that seed is planted in your life, I have confidence in its ability to bring you into a new, into a new creation.

So please come, come again, come again, and hear the word of Christ spoken to you. And then can I say something to perhaps another person?

Are you weary in hearing the word of God? Have you been a Christian for some time, and the novelty of the Bible has, well, its shine has gone a bit dull?

to begin with, you were avid in coming to it, you read it, you read it daily and feverishly, and you memorized parts of it, but now somehow it hasn't got that attraction that it once had.

[25 : 08] Well, I want to say two things to you from the Bible. The first is that the Spirit works through the word little by little.

He does it progressively. It's interesting that in a slightly different context, Jesus says to, in verse 16, in verse 12 rather, I've still many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

He recognized that there are things that at a time down the road the disciples could take it in and benefit from it, but now was not the time.

And so it is with us that Jesus wants his spirit to progressively teach us.

And wherever you are in the Christian life and for however long you've been in Christ, there is still much, much more for you to receive from the word of God.

[26 : 27] And progressively he wants to give it to you. And the coming of that word into your heart, it's more horticultural than mechanical. Expect it to come and to develop and to bear fruit.

And the other thing perhaps I could impress upon us all is just once again the character of Holy Scripture. Do you know the people in Thessalonica they were the cause of enormous thanksgiving! to Paul for this reason that when they received the word of God they accepted it for what it really is the word of God.

God and if that if we can keep if you who perhaps have found reading the Bible for yourself and there's a same sameness in coming to hear familiar passages on a Sunday what we need to go back to again and again is that this is the word of God for which we thank him.

I'm not a royalist in a big way I have no problem with us having a royal family but I don't follow the saga of what goes on but I did watch the coronation last of King Charles and I watched it with one motive especially in mind were they going to include an item that had taken place in coronations down through the century in our country and I was elated when they kept to it do you know what it was someone came forward to give the crowned king a Bible and they said to him this is the most valuable thing this world affords here is wisdom here is the royal law these are the lively oracles of

[29 : 08] God and that's eternally true the living oracles of God given to a king and given to you may he speak to you through them day by day lord's day by lord's day you can't be without put christ in the scriptures seniors seniors seniors