

## (2) The Spirit of truth

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[ 0 : 00 ] The reading this morning is in two parts from the Gospel of John. The first part is chapter 14, verses 25 to 31, and that's on page 1087.

And then we'll turn over the page for the second part. So the first part is John 14, starting at verse 25. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

You heard me say to you, I am going away and I will come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

[ 1 : 11 ] And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming.

He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

And then over the page in chapter 16, verse 12. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

He 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 that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

[ 2 : 26 ] Thanks John very much indeed for reading, and I'll be grateful if we keep our Bibles open please, at John chapter 14 on page 1087.

As I said last week, the aim of this series on the Holy Spirit is to look at what we might call the core work of the Spirit, as we look at Jesus' own teaching about the Holy Spirit.

I think it's fair to say that sadly Christians often disagree about some aspects of the Spirit's work, what is prophecy, should Christians speak in tongues, those sorts of things.

And as a result, we all too easily, I think, lose sight of what is at the very heart of the Spirit's work.

Hence the aim of this series, to look at the Bible's core teaching on the work of the Spirit, and to do so from the lips of Jesus himself in John's Gospel.

Now as usual, we'll have a question time after today's talk, so if you have any questions you'd like to ask, do store them up until the end. But before we go any further, why don't I pray for us?

[ 3 : 35 ] Heavenly Father, we thank you for the work of your Holy Spirit, who makes Jesus real to us. And we pray, Heavenly Father, as we look at his work further this morning, please would he be our teacher and our instructor.

And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, one of the questions the political commentators are asking at the moment is, will it be business as usual once Gordon Brown has become Prime Minister in a few weeks' time?

There's been plenty of speculation as to what a brown cabinet might look like, and how much, if at all, policy will change. Whether it's foreign affairs, or the economy, or education, or the health service, is it going to be business as usual once Tony Blair has left?

Or will there be dramatic changes? Well, we saw last week that in a sense, that is the question that Jesus' disciples are asking at this particular point, in John's Gospel, in John chapters 14 to 17.

It's just a few hours before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. He's told his disciples that he'll be leaving them, and so inevitably, really, they are full of questions.

[ 4 : 54 ] Do download last week's talk and listen to it if you haven't yet done so, because we saw last week that Jesus assures his disciples that it will be business as usual.

We saw that the Spirit will bring the very presence of Jesus to his followers. As Jesus says in verse 18 of John 14, I will not leave you as orphans.

I will come to you. The Spirit will be another Jesus. Perhaps if we're somewhere here today looking in on the claims of Jesus, we perhaps at times wondered how it is that Christians can claim to know Jesus Christ, when even by their own reckoning, he is in heaven.

The answer? Because the Holy Spirit brings the very presence of Jesus to us. And even for Christians, I guess it's easy to lose sight of that fact, and it's easy to lose sight of the fact that this is at the very heart of the Spirit's work.

Some Christians think the Spirit's work is really all about power, for example. Perhaps powerful Christian living or impressive demonstrations of power. Other Christians perhaps think that the Spirit's work is really all about performance, and that the Spirit's main business is to enable us to excise spiritual gifts.

[ 6 : 19 ] Or perhaps others think it's all about purity, cleansing his people from sin and enabling them to be more like Jesus. Now, however much the Holy Spirit is concerned about those things, I think we saw last week they aren't at the very heart of what the Spirit's work is, which is to bring the very presence of Jesus to his people.

That is how we can know Jesus today. But then another aspect of Jesus' work that we need to be clear on, sorry, another aspect of the Spirit's work that we need to be clear on, if we're to be confident in our knowledge of Jesus, is the Spirit's work as a teacher.

And that is what we're going to be looking at today. There's a talk outline on the back of the service sheet, and you'll see there in the first point, we'll be looking at the Spirit of Truth and the words of the Apostles.

The Spirit of Truth and the words of the Apostles, as we consider the Spirit's work as a teacher. Have a look with me at John 14, 25 and 26.

As Jesus says, These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

[ 7 : 43 ] Just think, it must have been extraordinary, mustn't it, for those disciples to have had Jesus with them all the time. So they're in front of Jesus, when he delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

They heard those parables as they came from his lips for the first time. If they were ever confused, they could ask for an explanation, and get us a personal tutorial, so to speak.

What an extraordinary privilege those first disciples had. But now Jesus is about to leave. And so they must have been thinking to themselves, How will we know the truth about God once Jesus has gone?

What will we do when Jesus is no longer with us as our teacher? Well, Jesus assures them that they won't be left in the dark.

The Spirit will be their teacher. I think people often get confused about the Spirit and about his work.

[ 8 : 49 ] I think often, because perhaps we separate the work of the Spirit from the work of Jesus, as if they kind of operate in two entirely independent spheres.

So we imagine, for example, that the work of Jesus is to bring God's work of salvation to us, it's to bring us into a relationship with God. But while the Spirit, he has a kind of totally different job.

He's there to give us great experiences of God, if you like. If it's something which we can't quite understand, then we often say, well, it must be the Spirit at work, as if he's operating a sort of sideshow.

But when we come to the Bible, there's no such separation between the work of the Spirit and the work of Jesus Christ like that. Just as the Spirit takes the place of Jesus, he is to us today, what Jesus was to those original disciples when he was on earth, so too the Spirit takes the place of Jesus as a teacher.

Jesus was known as a teacher. He's often addressed teacher. And so too the Spirit takes the place of Jesus as a teacher. So notice in verse 26, that Jesus says that the Spirit will be sent in my name.

[ 10 : 08 ] In other words, he will speak for Jesus, in his place, and with his authority. At the beginning of last week, Paris Hilton, the hotel heiress, began what at least was meant to be 24 days in the Los Angeles County Jail.

Of course, she got off pretty likely, didn't she, with three days in the end. But on the day that she was sent to prison, Steve Whitmore, the sheriff's spokesman, said that she was being sent to a section of the jail reserved for police officers, police officers, public officials, celebrities, and other high-profile inmates.

Now, since he's the sheriff's spokesman, I believed him. I would expect him to speak on behalf of the sheriff. I'm not quite sure what sheriffs are.

I imagine they used to wear big Stetsons and that kind of thing, but nonetheless, I imagine that he was speaking on behalf of the sheriff in his place. Similarly, the spirit is sent in the place of Jesus to speak on behalf of Jesus in his place.

And Jesus goes on to promise, he will teach you all things. Now, that doesn't mean the spirit will tell me everything I always wanted to know about everything, because clearly in the context, it must be all things about Jesus.

[ 11 : 34 ] But then, can you see in verse 26 how he continues, and will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Jesus has taught his disciples consistently for three years, but now he's leaving them. He wants to ensure that his teaching won't be forgotten, but will be preserved and then passed on to future generations.

And that's precisely what happened. Who was it who wrote the New Testament and oversaw the writing of the New Testament? Jesus' disciples, or those who knew them very well and based what they wrote on their teaching.

Now, it's important to see that this promise in verse 26 is a promise first and foremost to those original disciples and not first and foremost to us today. It's why Jesus changes from talking about people generally to now addressing the disciples in particular.

So, if we just look back into chapter 14, up to this point, he's been talking about people generally. So, verse 9, he talks about whoever. Verse 12, whoever. Verse 21, whoever.

[ 12 : 47 ] Verse 23, anyone. But now in verse 25, he turns to address the disciples as he says, these things I've spoken to you while I am still with you.

And verse 26, the Holy Spirit will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I've said to you. In other words, this is a specific promise made to the original disciples.

After all, only they can be reminded of everything that Jesus said to them. Now, in fact, there are a number of examples of that kind of reminding process happening in John's Gospel.

So, for example, just to keep a finger in John 14 and turn back a few pages to John chapter 2 on page 1070. Now, here in John chapter 2, Jesus has just cleared the temple and he explains his actions in verse 19.

Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up. The Jews then said, it's taken 46 years to build this temple and would you raise it up in three days?

[ 14 : 03 ] But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

So, here is something the disciples, they didn't understand it at the time, but they did later. How? Because the Spirit reminded them of everything Jesus had said to them.

Now, one of the most frequent objections to Christianity is the suggestion that we cannot trust what the apostles wrote as they came to write and oversee the New Testament.

Now, in fact, we can trust it for a number of reasons, but supremely we can trust it because the Holy Spirit of God ensured that as those disciples taught that first generation of Christians, as they explained the message of Jesus to them, as they clarified that message for future generations, as they wrote down what we now have as the New Testament, why the Holy Spirit ensured they got it right.

Now, that's important teaching, of course, because it corrects two popular misconceptions. The first is about the Bible and the idea that the Bible is simply a human book. That is what Geoffrey Archer asserts in his newly published *The Gospel According to Judas Iscariot*.

[ 15 : 36 ] Not, of course, that Geoffrey Archer would ever really get top points as a reliable historian, but I think he does reflect fairly accurately the assumption of many people today as he writes this.

The Gospels were written late in the first century. We do not know the identity of the evangelists, in other words, those who wrote the Gospels because the names Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were added to manuscripts late in the second century.

He concludes it is probable that none of the evangelists was an apostle. In other words, he's saying the apostles didn't oversee the writing of the New Testament.

But clearly, that is to deny the Spirit's work who ensured that they wrote precisely what Jesus wanted them to write. Which, of course, is why Christians confidently, why we confidently base our lives upon the New Testament as well as the Old.

And it's why here in verse 27, Jesus can speak of giving his disciples peace once he is left, of not being troubled, of not being afraid, because the church was not going to be left in the dark.

[16:52] The teaching of Jesus would be preserved down the ages. And the second popular misconception is about Jesus and the idea that the kind of the real historical Jesus, the real Jesus, who you could have met if you had lived 2,000 years ago, has somehow kind of been lost in the midst of time.

And all that we have in the New Testament is a really kind of human record of him and his teaching, but we're sort of unable to get back to that real Jesus, what he was really like. But again, that is to deny the work of the Spirit.

Because here we have a divine record of Jesus and his teaching. God, the Holy Spirit, in other words, ensured that those apostles got it right.

The Bible comes with the authority of God himself. Now you get a similar thing to what we've seen in John 14 and John 16. I'm not going to look at it now.

It's good to have had it read earlier, but I've put a couple of bullet points down there on the outline for you to look up later on. So then, that is our first point, the Spirit of Truth and the words of the apostles.

[18:07] Secondly, the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit-filled life. Because perhaps we can now begin to see what one of the key aspects of the Spirit-filled life looks like, it is to hold on to Jesus' teaching.

Have a look with me at verses 23 and 24. Jesus answered Judas, If anyone loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words, and the words that you hear is not mine, but the Father's if you sense me. Now, I've only been skiing once, I think I was about 12 or 13, something like that, but it left its mark.

I still remember the first day, having sort of struggled for hours, even to get up the drag lift without sort of falling off it. Eventually, all of us in our beginners skiing class, we're at the very sort of top of, I was going to say a mountain, it was just a kind of little, it's a rather pathetic slope actually, but it sounds better if you say mountain.

There we are, all sort of lined up, and the last person I remember to come off the drag lift, sort of join the queue, fell over, and all the rest of us then fell over, rather sort of, like a sort of dominoes effect.

[19:26] But the thing I quickly learned was that I had to lean forward, and if I didn't lean forward, I would fall over. In fact, I can remember the instructor bellowing to all of us, lean forward, lean forward.

And basically, I worked out fairly quickly, that if I, if I heeded his teaching, if I held on to that, then miraculously, I seemed to keep going. Often unable to stop, but I was delighted, nonetheless, just to be able to keep going.

Well, in these verses, Jesus commands us to hold on to his teaching. Because here, Jesus is addressing not just those original disciples, but anyone who loves him.

And how will subsequent generations be able to hold on to Jesus' teaching? Well, through the New Testament, through what the apostles wrote. You see, it's extraordinary, isn't it, when we put together these two points, that Jesus Christ has made provision for an accurate, reliable account of his teaching to be preserved by the apostles for subsequent generations, as the apostles were enabled by the Holy Spirit to do that.

And therefore, subsequent generations are to hold on to that teaching. Indeed, that is precisely why John has written his Gospel.

[20:49] So again, turn on a few pages to John chapter 20, on page 1093. 3. And here, Thomas has just met the risen Jesus, and having doubted who he was, he proclaims, verse 28, my Lord and

my God.

What does Jesus then say to Thomas in verse 29? Jesus says to him, have you believed because you've seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

In other words, he's saying, look, from now on, people will come to believe in Jesus, not because, like Thomas, they have been able to touch the risen Jesus and see him physically, but in some other way.

Well, how is that going to happen? Verse 30. Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

In other words, it is through books like John's Gospel, written by the apostles as the Holy Spirit brought to mind what to write and recorded for us in the New Testament through books like that that people will come to believe in Jesus through the New Testament.

[ 22 : 19 ] You see, the point is it is not irrational to hold on to the teaching of Jesus Christ, even in the 21st century. Now, of course, those in the media love to label those who do so as fundamentalists, but Christians do so and always have done because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

This is the work Jesus says the Spirit will do. In other words, I take it that if we're someone here today who is keen to bow to the authority of the risen Jesus Christ, while we will bow out of the authority of the New Testament.

Or to put it another way, if we're someone here today who wants to submit to the Spirit, then I take it we will submit to the teaching of the New Testament.

You see, we can't divorce the Word of God from the Spirit of God. This passage gives the lie, doesn't it, to the popular idea that there are some churches which we might call sort of Spirit churches, and there are other churches which we might call word churches.

But the role of the Spirit is to bring the teaching of Jesus to the apostles for future generations of Christians, for us. And so a central mark, therefore, of the Spirit-filled church, is the conviction that the Bible is the Holy Spirit speaking the words of Jesus to us.

[ 23 : 46 ] And I take it too, that will be one of the primary convictions of the Spirit-filled Christian as well. Which is why I think Christians have always been suspicious of claims to further revelation that is binding on the conscience of other Christians.

In some churches, for example, words of prophecy or words of knowledge can assume an importance and generate a degree of excitement, far in excess, of even what is generated by the sermon.

But if we really do believe the Spirit-inspired the writing of the Bible, then I take it that hearing the Bible read and explained should be the high point of a church meeting.

Or in more liberal churches, which have perhaps cut themselves off from the authority of the Bible, you may hear people claiming that the Spirit is leading them into new truth, even truth which contradicts the Bible.

But one of the tests of a genuine church has always been that it's apostolic. In other words, it is built on the foundations of the apostles' teaching.

[ 24 : 59 ] We didn't say the creed today, but when we do, we say we believe in one true apostolic church. And so a church, therefore, that moves away from the apostles' teaching, ceases to be a church in any Christian sense of the word.

Yes, they may still meet in a church building, there may still be religious professionals wearing long robes or not, but it has ceased to be a church.

Which I think explains what is going on in the worldwide Anglican church at the moment, if you've been following that in the press. When the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church of America, for example, denies the teaching of the New Testament, as she does, not only on the issue of sexuality, but on the uniqueness of Christ, for example, she says that she denies what Jesus says in John chapter 14, that he alone is the way to God, then clearly that church has ceased to be church in any truly Christian sense of the word.

Why? Because it has turned its back on the Spirit's teaching as we have it in the New Testament.

By contrast, the authentic church and the authentic Christian will have a spirit given the enthusiasm to hear the truth, to defend the truth, and to tell it to others.

So let me ask, do you want to hear the Spirit speak to you today? If you do, read this book. Maybe you stopped reading your Bible.

[ 26 : 44 ] Perhaps you never started. Well, why not start? Or start again? Read it for yourself. Go to the bookstore. Ask someone to recommend some Bible reading notes.

There are a number of good sets of Bible reading notes on the bookstore. And then let's encourage each other to hold on to Jesus' teaching as the Holy Spirit brings it to us in the pages of the Bible. And to hold on to it in the face of all the circumstances which we face through the week at work, at home, at the school gate and so on. Or perhaps there's someone here today and you're looking in on Christianity.

Perhaps in a sense you long to hear the voice of the living God speaking to you. You want to know what God's word for you is today. Well, again, read this book.

A good place to start would be by reading through John's Gospel. It wouldn't take very long, no more than a couple of hours. It would be a great thing to do. Well, why don't we pray?

[ 27 : 50 ] And then, if there are any questions, we can take questions. Let's pray together. For the help of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Heavenly Father, we thank you very much for this wonderful work of your Spirit. Even though we live 2,000 years after the life and teaching and death of Jesus Christ, nonetheless, we thank you that you have preserved for us an accurate account of his life and teaching.

Thank you for the real confidence, therefore, we can have as we read the pages of the Bible, that they are the words of the living God. And we pray you'd help us to hold on to them and to encourage each other to do that.

And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. amen. .

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