

# TRINITY 3A - Bible Study

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] It is the 4th of March 2004 Paul Barker as part of the Trinity on Trinity series is conducting a Bible study on John chapters 14 to 16 In the course of the after dinner conversation Jesus seeks to reassure and comfort his disciples He said to them at the beginning of this after dinner discourse as it's called Do not let your hearts be troubled Believe in God Believe also in me Thus begins chapter 14 in John's Gospel And throughout the three chapters that follow part of Jesus' discussion by way of reassuring, comforting preparing his disciples for what is going to happen and the aftermath of his death and resurrection Jesus on a number of occasions refers to the promise of the Holy Spirit and it is those verses which I'm dealing with tonight

Not all of these three chapters and I run the risk, I guess, in selecting some material rather than all of it that we run the risk of losing a bit of the sense of the context of what's going on But for the sake of brevity and for the sake of the series on Trinity I'm selective in the verses of these three chapters Firstly, chapter 14, verses 15 onwards to 24 There are five little sections I'm dealing with tonight Chapter 14, verse 15 says If you love me, you will keep my commandments And similarly at the end of this section Verse 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me And embedded in the middle of the section they who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me and those who love me will be loved by my Father and I will love them and reveal myself to them The promise of the Holy Spirit in this section is bracketed by and centred on the command to love expressed in obedience to the Son In some ways it reminds me of the lengthy discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians which is centred on that famous chapter of love

And so often we need to be reminded if we're pursuing the things of the Spirit that we must be loving people and obedient to the Son Jesus in promising the Holy Spirit here doesn't say Holy Spirit So that's who he's referring to I will ask the Father he says in verse 16 and he will give you another advocate to be with you forever And the word advocate occurs four times in these three chapters as Jesus promises the Holy Spirit When he says another advocate he means another like the advocate that you've already got or had Not another of a different kind but another of the same kind and he's referring to himself Jesus has been their advocate but he's about to go And part of the purpose of these chapters is to help the disciples face up to the fact that Jesus is going but to reassure them by the measures that Jesus is taking for the time after he's gone He will not leave them abandoned but he will provide for them another advocate as he was the advocate for them And the sense of advocate the Greek word is paraclete it's often hard to pin down its precise meaning and different Bible translations have different words such as counselor or sometimes it doesn't even translate the Greek word because it's so confused or hard to find a term but maybe along the lines of a legal friend like a patron somebody who's got some clout who can speak for you or plead your case that's sort of the idea though it's not totally confined to the legal situation either and notice that this promised advocate like Jesus had been the advocate would be with you forever unlike Jesus who is about to go from the disciples through the crucifixion resurrection and ascension this advocate would be with them forever and then he describing still the Holy Spirit says this is the spirit of truth verse 17 says not an insignificant way of describing the Holy Spirit and another way that shows the strong continuity between Jesus and the Spirit for just as Jesus was the advocate and the Holy Spirit will continue Jesus' ministry by being another advocate of the same kind so Jesus is the truth this very chapter has just said that a few minutes before

I am the way the truth and the life and just as Jesus has claimed to be the truth so this advocate that he's sending is the spirit of truth his own spirit continuing the same sort of ministry that Jesus himself in one sense has exercised one of the things that needs to be stressed because this passage stresses it is the very close intimate association relationship between the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit not totally the same of course there is a strong continuity between them now remember that Jesus is comforting troubled disciples disciples who are beginning to grieve because Jesus is about to go away from them and he's saying that his spirit whom he's about to send or will send will provide an ongoing connection or intimacy with in fact Jesus himself the end of verse 17 says you know him because he abides with you and he will be in you it's not just a sort of inner feeling because he's also with you not just in you he's talking there about the Holy Spirit but the result of the Holy Spirit being with and in the disciples of Jesus is that as verse 18 says

I will not leave you orphaned I am coming to you that is when God God's spirit the spirit of truth the advocate or the Holy Spirit comes into the disciple of Jesus then Jesus can just the same say I am coming to you that is it's not just I'm sending a spirit but I am coming to you or if the spirit of Jesus dwells in someone then we can say that Jesus dwells within them as well and when Jesus says I'll not leave you orphaned I'm coming to you he's not talking about coming back from the dead on Easter day because a few weeks later he would then rise and ascend to heaven and be gone again nor is he referring to the second coming either he's referring to that interim period from his ascension if you like he's going away until his second coming and he's saying this is the Holy Spirit will be with you and the result is that I Jesus will be with you but not only that either looking down to verse 23 Jesus says that those who love me will keep my word and my father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them so that if you like the result of the spirit of truth the advocate being in the disciples of Jesus

[ 6 : 18 ] Jesus can say I am coming and I'll be with you but we father and son together we will be there and we will abide in you as verse 23 says we can say that in effect the disciples of Jesus would have the full presence of the trinitarian God with them by virtue of the spirit of God dwelling within nor is this just limited to the 12 disciples either because verse 21 in this translation says they who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me literally is anyone or whoever keeps my commandments and the same in verse 23 those who love me will keep my word that is anybody whoever keeps my loves me and keeps my word it's not restricted or limited to the immediate disciples of Jesus but for those of us hundreds of years later in a similar situation loving Jesus and keeping his commandments and this applies for us as well so the Holy Spirit then brings for the followers of Jesus an immediacy and intimacy of the presence of God

Father Son and Spirit that hasn't been known since the Garden of Eden indeed one of the big themes through the Bible is bridging the barrier to enable God and humanity to be present together again humanity banished from the garden because of its sin in Genesis 3 and the approaches of God through the scriptures often symbolic often temporary becoming more permanent with the building of a tabernacle and a temple in the Old Testament but still people keeping their distance becoming closer when the Jesus was incarnate on earth and closer still now Jesus is promising but after he goes away the presence of God will be even closer in the people of God by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit and thus the dwelling of Jesus and the Father as well that's the first section the second one is the verses that immediately follow verses 25 and 26 now Jesus singles out the role of this Spirit to be primarily a teaching role earlier his promise of intimacy with the giving of the Spirit was partly to alleviate fear and you think about it if a loved one of yours is dying or has died how much we wish for the intimacy that we've lost with that person that's the grief that the disciples were facing in a sense and Jesus is saying that by the gift of their Spirit he can alleviate their fear because that intimacy will continue with the Spirit now he also reassures them that the Spirit will teach them because one of their fears is their confusion their misunderstanding of what Jesus has been teaching them and what's going on and why it's going on so Jesus continues to alleviate their fears by promising them that this Spirit the Advocate the Holy Spirit verse 26 whom the Father will send in my name will teach you everything and remind you of all that I've said to you so that he will explain and the disciples will understand the things that they don't yet understand and are confused about which is exacerbating their fear and their grief on the night before Jesus' crucifixion notice again that this Spirit this Advocate the Holy Spirit as it's called here for the first time will continue

Jesus' teaching it's not an independent teaching ministry again the strong lines of continuity between what the Son does and what the Spirit does are evident here in these verses he will remind them of all that I have said to you not a new body of knowledge this does seem to be more limited to the disciples who were gathered in that upper room with Jesus that night because he's reminding those people of what Jesus has said to them what he's going to teach them well he'll be sent in my name verse 26 says representing Jesus again acknowledging the closeness of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit to teach you everything of course doesn't mean that you'll be able to get perfect enter scores in VCE and get high distinctions in all the courses that you study it's rather to teach you everything about the events that are about to happen in effect to explain them across the resurrection the ascension and the promise of the end as well if we turn over to chapter 15 the end of chapter 15 we come to the third section in this three chapter discourse that mentions the promise of the Spirit this time verses 26 and 27 of chapter 15 when the advocate comes whom I will send to you from the Father the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father he will testify on my behalf now notice that in the earlier passages in chapter 14 the Father will send the Spirit though at Jesus' request we saw back in verse 15 of chapter 14 but now we're told in verse 26 that Jesus

I will send to you the advocate the Father sends the Spirit Jesus sends the Spirit earlier on it's Jesus asking the Father to send the Spirit but here we again get the sense of this close unity of Father, Son and Spirit being expressed here at one level we can say well the Father sends the Spirit at another level it's true to say that Jesus sends the Spirit notice too that Jesus doesn't leave the Spirit behind he has to go away in order to send the Spirit which is one reason in that well-known song there is a Redeemer in the chorus I much prefer that we sing and sending your Spirit till the work on earth is done he doesn't just leave the Spirit he actually sends the Spirit till the work on earth is done now the role of the Spirit here at the end of chapter 15 verse 26 is to testify to whom does the Spirit testify to the disciples well not really because verse 27 says to the disciples you also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning the role of the Spirit in these two verses will be to testify to the world in conjunction with the disciples about the Son and the events of his death and resurrection and ascension that is the Spirit is in effect testifying to the world the Gospel and the Spirit is testifying to the hearts of the people of the world about the Gospel and that of course is exactly what we find in the next book of the New Testament when we read into the Acts of the Apostles in Acts chapter 5 for example we are witnesses to these things and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him in chapter 6 of Acts

Stephen in the story of Stephen they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke that is as the followers of Jesus testified to the truths about Jesus the Spirit was testifying now maybe the Spirit testifies to the world independent of the disciples but the disciples can't just sit back and let the Spirit do the job because primarily they are the instruments of the testimony of the testifying of the Spirit to the world about the Gospel and despite the hostility of the world which is a theme in some of the verses that we are omitting looking at tonight here in chapter 15 and also again in chapter 16 the followers of Jesus are not to withdraw because of the world's hostility they are to testify and they are to testify in and through the Spirit that Jesus is sending to them one other thing to notice at the end of chapter 5 when the advocate comes whom I will send to you from the Father the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father he will testify on my behalf not an it same in chapter 16 later on the Holy Spirit if it's not been clear already is clearly personal he's not an impersonal force or power he is a person of the Godhead as the Father sent the Son so the Father sends the Spirit personally the Spirit dwells in personally as Jesus dwells in as the Father dwells and makes his home in the followers of Jesus as well and that's reflected by the masculine pronoun here not a neuter one as we may expect well the fourth section is into chapter 6 from the passage that Paul read for us a bit earlier on from chapter 16 verse 7 to 11 for this fourth little section the fourth occurrence in these chapters of the word advocate applying to the Holy Spirit and Jesus says in verse 7 nevertheless

[ 14 : 35 ] I tell you the truth it is to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go away the advocate will not come to you but if I go I'll send him to you Jesus is saying that it's not it's not even a neutral thing that Jesus goes and sends the advocate it's actually better for the disciples that Jesus goes and sends the advocate of course it's better for the disciples because Jesus is going to die and rise again and ascend to heaven his work of salvation complete and so the Spirit coming will apply that finished work of creation the followers of Jesus and testify about that gospel to the world in these verses the role of the Spirit to the world is elaborated on in a way that we don't find I think anywhere else in the New Testament generally speaking the role of the Spirit in discussions in 1 Corinthians for example and other parts of the New Testament is by and large with respect to the Spirit's role within and among the fellowship of God's people within the church here in particular it's the role of the Spirit directed to the world they're very difficult verses these ones and I'll skip entirely over the difficulties of the language and the grammar but simply verse 8 when he the Spirit comes he will prove the world wrong about sin righteousness and judgment three things that the world has got wrong sin well our world doesn't think much about sin it doesn't think that it's particularly sinful and so on righteousness our world's view of what righteousness is is pretty skewiff and judgment most of our world denies judgment entirely but it's more precise than that as well the Holy Spirit will prove the world wrong or expose or show the guilt or convince or convict that's the sense of the word that's being used here about these three things sin and verse 9 tells us that he will prove the world wrong about sin because they do not believe in Jesus that is the essence of sin is unbelief we probably don't think about that much when we confess our sins privately on Sundays in church we're probably thinking of infringing loving our neighbour we're not particularly thinking about sins of unbelief but fundamental to the essence of sin is unbelief and in particular notice it's they didn't believe in me

Jesus not just believe in God a sort of deistic or theistic view but a Christ centred belief that's where the world's got it wrong and the spirit will testify convince expose or show or prove the world wrong on its view of sin righteousness secondly verse 10 about righteousness because I Jesus am going to the father and you'll see me no longer what's the connection there well Jesus is about to be put to death as a sinner in Jewish eyes blasphemer no less but his resurrection and ascension will vindicate him in the eyes of not only God but the world and the spirit will testify about the resurrection of Jesus and the satisfaction of his sacrifice in a sense that is that Jesus was righteous not those who put him to death that's where real righteousness is found in Christ and Christ alone and the spirit's role to the world will be to show the world its error about righteousness in particular to do with Jesus Christ and similarly about judgment about judgment verse 11 says because the ruler of this world has been condemned well they thought they were judging

Jesus the next day and putting him to death and condemning him but not so because Jesus is the judge not the judge and in dying and rising he defeats the ruler of this world and condemns him that's the truth not what those on Good Friday thought and believed and so the spirit's role when he is sent will be to testify the truth about judgment Jesus is the judge and the ruler of this world has been condemned and again this is continuing the ministry of Jesus because in John's gospel we've seen already in chapter 7 in chapter 12 Jesus condemning the ruler of this world and announcing his judgment and again when we get to the acts of the apostles and the preaching of the disciples and apostles there we find exactly the same thing happening as promised here the spirit testifying to the world through the preaching of the apostles and they are cut to their heart the listeners in Acts chapter 2 verse 37 for example as the spirit does his job and people repent of their wrong thinking of unbelief or sin righteousness and judgment well the fifth section in these three chapters are the verses following chapter 16 verses 13 to 15 again in verse 13 as we've already seen the promise is that the spirit of truth when he comes he will guide you into all the truth for he'll not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears and he will declare to you the things that are to come that is to explain the cross the resurrection the ascension and to explain the promise of the second coming and heaven notice how fundamentally the spirit's role is a very what we might call rational role so often I think in Christian church circles we sort of think that the work of the spirit is going to be hyper emotional hyper spontaneous it's going to stir us up inside in our feelings certainly

Jesus is bringing comfort to troubled feelings in these chapters but the comfort comes from the explanation of the truth and the spirit will continue the ministry of Jesus in informing and enlightening the followers of Jesus but one additional role that comes in this last little section here in verse 14 the spirit will glorify Jesus because he will take what is mine and declare it to you all that the father has is mine for this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you I've got some wacky friends who I was at theological college with they're now in ministry in New Zealand from where they were originally from and they had a very large stuffed panda that would sit on a chair in the corner of their lounge room his name was Panda and whenever people would visit their house they'd be introduced to Panda always with the explanation he's the shy retiring type because he never said a word he's just a stuffed animal after all there's a sense in which the Holy Spirit is a sort of shy retiring type not quite that he doesn't ever speak a word and certainly not that he's just a stuffed animal but he's rarely seen he doesn't draw attention to himself he always directs attention elsewhere his ministry is transparent it is Jesus centred that's what this verse 14 is picking up the Spirit will glorify

Jesus in the same way that the Father does everything for the glory of the Son that's evident in the scriptures as a whole not least in John's Gospel supremely glorified on the cross so too the role of the Spirit is to glorify the Son sometimes in church circles there's concern that the mention the role the teaching of the Holy Spirit is either overplayed or underplayed that too much attention is given to the Holy Spirit or that not enough attention is being given to the Holy Spirit I think a simple test is along these lines is Jesus being glorified is the truth about Jesus being testified is the world being convicted of its wrong understandings of sin righteousness and judgment is intimacy with the Father and the Son being enjoyed by the followers of the Son are lives of love and obedience evident if so then the Holy Spirit is at work and praise be to Jesus for that God bless and praise be to you to the Holy Spirit our time so that

[ 22 : 27 ] Heology he