

Never Forget – John 16:1-7
Rob Willey, Coram Deo Bible Church

John 16:1-7.

We're continuing our study of John's gospel, and find ourselves in the middle of a long discourse by Jesus. A long talk as he and the disciples made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he was arrested.

And after telling us what to expect in chapter 15, v1-4 here in chapter 16 serve as a both a conclusion and transition. A *conclusion* of what he just said, that we're going to be hated and persecuted, and a transition to how the Holy Spirit will help us.

And the first point from these verses, is that . . .

Jesus spoke to sustain our faith (v1-4a)

Jesus said what he said in this discourse, to make sure we keep believing.

[1] *"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. [Sustain your faith.]*

[2] *They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.*

[3] *And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. [4] But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.* (ESV) Remember and never forget. Never stop thinking about what he said. Never put it out of your mind.

Great. Got it. Plain and simple. But what is it about his *telling* and our *remembering* that keeps us from falling away? Because that's the point he makes. *I have said all these things to you [v1] to keep you from falling away.*

How? How does speaking on Jesus' part, and remembering on ours, enable us to persevere and sustain our faith? Because that's what *compels* us to remember. Starting with this.

It assures us that God knows. Remembering what Jesus said sustains our faith . . .

• Because it assures us that God knows

He knows exactly what we're going through and always has. Because he spoke of it.

Like when God told the ancient Israelites that they would be servants in a foreign land, and it came to pass in Egypt. Or that they would be exiled to Babylon, and it happened. Remembering that, sustained them.

Same for the words of Jesus. In this case about trial and tribulation. Because when they come to pass, when they happen, it assures us that God knows, and always has. He's not caught off guard and he's not surprised.

But that's not the only reason. Remembering what Jesus said also sustains our faith . . .

• Because it affirms God's sovereignty

That he not only *knows* what's going to happen, but is fully in control. Allowing or ordaining the events of our lives, and using every single one of them. Working all things together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

When the things Jesus spoke take place, and we remember them, it affirms God's sovereignty. God's control. Because he speaks only what the Father tells him, and nothing different ever happens. Nothing contrary to what he said.

Third, remembering what Jesus said sustains our faith . . .

• Because it manages our expectations

Which is vital because *unmanaged* expectations will kill you. The more we expect the things that happen in the course of life, the more confident we will be in the midst of them. The more likely we will be to *stay* the course. That's the idea of v4.

[4] *I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes [when they happen] you may remember that I told them to you.* Why? To keep us from being surprised. Keep us out of the ditch.

If I somehow know that you're going to be fired this week, and tell you, are you going to be less prepared or more? More. Obviously. Because you expect it. Instead of thinking you'll work there forever, your expectations will be managed. Instead of having your world rocked, you'll stand on solid ground. Instead of giving up hope, you'll press on.

Same for us, and the words Jesus spoke about being hated and persecuted. They help sustain our faith by managing our expectations.

Fourth, remembering his words sustains our faith . . .

• Because it prepares us for opposition

Opposition that's inevitable. Just like Jesus said in v2 – *They will put you out of the synagogues.* They, meaning those who oppose you. They *will*.

And sure enough, it happened. Like when Paul and Silas were driven from the synagogue in Thessalonica; Acts 17 (5). And then the synagogue of Berea after that (13-14). And Corinth after that. (Acts 18:6-7) It happened.

And they kept the faith because they were prepared. Jesus *told* them it would happen.

He even told them of their death; v2b. *Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.* Like when Paul, formerly Saul, cast his vote with the chief *priests* to put Christians to death. (Acts 26:9-11) Thinking he was serving God. Doing the work of God. Fulfilling this prophecy to a "T".

[3] *And they will do these things [v3; they'll cast you out and put you to death] because they have not known the Father, nor me.* They thought they did. The Jewish leaders thought they did. And the Roman leaders as well with their *pantheon* of gods. They thought they knew God, but they didn't.

And neither do those in *our* day who oppose us. Liberal "Christians." Secular atheists. Militant Muslims. Radical politicians. They neither know God nor worship him. And Jesus is either a bad word or a figment of their imagination. So of course they oppose us. Why wouldn't they?

And you don't have to look far for examples. The Southern Poverty Law Center with their "hate group" list; right here in the United States. Islamic State Muslims murdering

Christians in Nigeria. Nations like North Korea and Iran who regularly punish them. Indonesia and Saudi Arabia who regularly suppress them. Examples abound.

Not to mention all the *historical* accounts of opposition to Christians. Like the one written by **Eusebius** in the 4th century. Eusebius was a church historian who wrote a book called *Ecclesiastical History*, where among other things, he recounts the plight of a small 2nd century church in modern day France, that endured persecution from the day it started.

Listen to what **he wrote**:

“First of all, they endured nobly the injuries heaped upon them by the populous—clamors and blows and draggings and robberies and stonings and imprisonments, and all the things which an infuriated mob delight in inflicting on enemies and adversaries.”
Opposition.

And to add insult to injury, the robberies took place while the believers gathered for worship. And yet they still met and persevered. Remembering the words of Jesus.

Until 177AD, when the religious and city officials had had enough. So they arrested them, brought them to the colosseum, and asked them under the threat of death if they were Christians. And “In the presence of the whole multitude [Eusebius said, they] confessed.”

And so, 48 precious believers from that little church were martyred that day. **(Quote)**
“All the people raged like wild beasts against us [Eusebius said. Including himself as a fellow believer.] So that even if they had before been moderate on account of friendship, they were now exceedingly furious and gnashed their teeth against us. And that which was spoken by our Lord was fulfilled: 'The time will come when whosoever kills you will think that he does service.'”

Service to God. John 16:2.

(<https://learn.ligonier.org/podcasts/5-minutes-in-church-history-with-stephen-nichols/lyon>)

Remembering the words of Jesus sustains our faith because it prepares us for opposition.

And last . . .

• **Because it keeps us from falling away**

Coming full circle to v1 – “*I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away*. Keep you from throwing in the towel. Keep you from giving up. Keep you from apostasy. Keep you from leaving the fight. Keep you from dropping out of the race.

Jesus *said all these things* to keep us from falling away.

So whatever you do . . .

• **Never forget!**

That’s the bottom line. Jesus spoke so we’d have something to remember, and thereby sustain our faith.

Never forget. Never forget what he said. Never forget his words. Never forget what he promised. Remember everything. That’s the first point. **(Summary)**

The second comes from v4-7. Starting in v4b – “*I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. [5] But now I am going to him who sent me, and none*

of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ [6] But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. [7] Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

The point is this:

Jesus left so the Spirit would come (v4b-7)

Straight from v7. Second part. [7b] “*If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you [the Holy Spirit]. But if I go, I will send him to you.*” Jesus left so he could send the Spirit. Because if he *didn’t* leave, he wouldn’t come. “*If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.*” (7b)

The question is, why? Why did Jesus have to leave in order for the Spirit to come? It’s not because they can’t be in the same room together. They’ve been in perfect, unbroken fellowship for all eternity. As part of the godhead. The Trinity.

Nor is it because they’ll rain on each other’s parade. Get in the way of one another’s work. Jesus sent him to carry *on* his work. Further his work.

No, Jesus had to leave for the Spirit to come because that was the Father’s plan from the beginning. That the Messiah would first do *his* work, his work of redemption, and then the Spirit would follow and magnify it. Apply it.

Just like Jesus said back in **John 7:38-39** – [38] *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’*” [39] *Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* The plan hadn’t yet come to fruition.

And the same is true here in chapter 16 just a short while later. Jesus hadn’t yet died, risen, and ascended back to heaven. So as long as *that* waited, the Spirit waited.

But eventually, Jesus left and the Spirit came.

And he did so . . .

• **To provide and protect in place of Jesus**

[4b] “*I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.*” He didn’t have to warn and prepare the disciples for the world’s hatred and persecution, because he was there. With them. Taking the hits himself. Watching over them himself. Providing for them and protecting them himself. They didn’t *need* to know.

It’s like a good Dad who watches over his kids. Does he tell them about every danger? Every risk? And every means he employs to protect them? Not at all. Does he burden them with paying the bills and providing a home? No. As long as he’s there, he takes care of it. Just like Jesus did.

But when he was about to leave, he read the disciples in. And us as well. Not only telling us what’s to come in the way of difficulty and opposition, but that he was sending the Holy Spirit of God to provide and protect in his place.

Not only that, but Jesus left so the Spirit would come . . .

- **To lift our eyes and change our heart**

“I didn’t say these things before, Jesus said – *But now* [v5] *I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’*” Peter had, earlier, at the last supper; but not now. Not since. Now all they could think of was themselves.

Nobody’s thinking about me, Jesus said – [6] *But because I have said these things to you* [v6], *sorrow has filled your heart*. In other words, “You’re so self-absorbed, and so worried about yourselves, and so full of self-pity, you’re oblivious to me. And oblivious to all that I’m telling you.” If that doesn’t speak to our day, I don’t know what does.

Nevertheless, Jesus said, full of grace upon grace, “I’m sending the Spirit to you. In *spite* of your self-centeredness and self-pity, I’m sending the Helper.” That’s the flow of thought.

And why? Why did he send the Spirit? To lift our eyes and *change* our heart. To break us *out* of our self-absorbed narcissism, and change our entire worldview.

So that instead of *wallowing* in our self-pity and *bemoaning* our situation; instead of living for ourselves and loving our sin; we fix our eyes on Jesus and love *God*.

All because of the Spirit. All because Jesus left, and he came.

Third, the Spirit came . . .

- **To remind us and help us**

Remind us of all the things Jesus said and all the things he taught. He said what he said that we would remember it, v4; and then sent the Holy Spirit to remind us. That’s the implication.

But if you *remember*, if the Spirit’s reminding you as I speak, Jesus was also explicit about it. Explicit about reminding us. Back in **John 14:25-26** – “*These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. [26] 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*.” Remind us of everything he spoke.

Jesus left, so the Spirit would come, to remind us of all he said while he was still here. No wonder he said in v7 – *It is to your advantage that I go away*. The Holy Spirit reminds us.

That’s why it’s not a waste of time to *read* the words of Jesus; regardless of how poor your memory might be. That’s why we *study* his Word. That’s why we memorize it and meditate on it. The Spirit reminds us.

And that’s why we need not fear a *lack* of words in a given situation; what to say about something. How to respond. Because the Spirit reminds us. He gives us the words. It’s one of the reasons he came when Jesus left.

Plus, he came to help us in general. Remind us *and* help us. Indicated by his very name. The *Helper*. *If I do not go away* [v7], the Helper *will not come to you*. The Helper who helps. The leader who leads. The counselor who comforts. The watchman who warns. The advocate who pleads. Jesus left so the Spirit could help.

And not just alongside us, but *within* us. Never to leave us or forsake us.

Talk about advantageous. Jesus left so the Spirit never would. Reminding us and helping us with everything we need for life and godliness. Everything.

So whatever you do . . .

- **Embrace him!**

So many Christians pay lip service to the Holy Spirit, but don’t really embrace him. Don’t really acknowledge him. Don’t talk with him or listen to him. Heed him or follow him.

We’re so scared of what people might think, we actually *quench* the Spirit’s presence and influence. We’re so entrenched in our sin and deceit, we *grieve* the Holy Spirit. And we’re so scared of being “charismatic,” we throw the baby out with the bath water. In our worship, our speech, our prayers, everything.

So how about this? Instead of holding him at arm’s length, how about we *embrace* the Spirit in our lives? Avoid the spiritual gobbledygook, yes. Erase the spiritual antics, for sure. But *embrace* the Spirit himself.

How about we worry more about what God thinks than what man thinks? How about we *repent* of our sin and secrets, and release the Spirit in our lives? How about we *embrace* him and cling to him to do whatever *he* wants?

That’s the second point. Embrace him, and never forget.

Prayer – Father, thank you for sending Jesus to speak and sustain us; prepare us and keep us. Forgive us for our short-term memory, and help us never forget. Help us keep the faith and remember everything. And forgive us, we pray, for holding your Spirit at arm’s length. For grieving and quenching him when we should be following and embracing him.

You Are Loved