



SERMON TITLE: "Confidence in the Spirit"

DATE: October 11, 2020

SCRIPTURE: John 14:15-27

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"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

Jesus' disciples were in the Upper Room with Jesus on the night he was arrested before he went to the cross. And that night, they felt what we as Jesus' disciples often feel today; they felt confusion about the Holy Spirit. That night Jesus told them that he was going to leave them and simultaneously come to them and that he was going to do that through the Holy Spirit. At the time, this would've baffled them. And for us, we know the extremes of those who imprison the Holy Spirit in the Bible and are wary of those who frequently talk about "experiencing the Spirit," and we also know the other extreme of those who ardently pursue emotional highs in the name of the Holy Spirit, sometimes to the neglect of listening to the Spirit in God's Word.

So how do we move from this confusion to confidence in our relationship with the Spirit? John wants his readers to reflect on how the disciples felt, and then ask questions like this. Yes, there will always be a measure of holy mystery in regards to the Spirit, but that ought to strengthen rather than negate our need for assurance as we think about his presence in our lives. So again, how do we gain clarity and confidence in our relationship with the Holy Spirit?

In John 14:16, Jesus says, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever, the Holy Spirit." This word "Helper" is only used 5x in the whole Bible. Broadly, it can mean "one who comes alongside," but it is also frequently translated as "Comforter," "Counselor," "Intercessor," "Supporter," or "Advocate." Seeing the Holy Spirit as "The Helper" is foundational to the confidence we have to consider.

In 14:26, Jesus says, "The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, he will teach you all things, and bring to remembrance all that I have said to you." Part of the teaching ministry of the Spirit is that he brings to mind the truth about Jesus. So, if you're depressed or impatient or worried or addicted or prideful or judgmental or deceived or abused or angry, the Spirit – in those moments – wants to remind you that those things aren't your master. Jesus is. He is Lord. Those things don't get final claim on your identity. Jesus does. Those things won't last. Jesus will. And we have to take every thought and emotion captive and trust the Spirit in those moments to bring to mind the truth about Jesus.

In 15:26, Jesus says, "When The Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, he will bear witness about me." That is, "he will testify about me." This is law-court language. The Spirit is the perfect witness. He says, "This is true about Jesus. This is who Jesus really is. He is God in the flesh, and nothing you feel or face is too big for him." That's the Spirit bearing witness when you sense those things.

In 16:14, Jesus simply says, "He will glorify me." What Jesus is trying to show his friends that night in the Upper Room, and what he is trying to show us is that the Spirit has one ultimate task: to teach about, bring to remembrance, bear witness to, and *glorify* Jesus. Because he dwells in us, the Spirit comes alongside us as our Helper to make us see Jesus more clearly. And this leads us to the most straightforward answer to our question about gaining confidence in the Holy Spirit...

The Spirit's job is a floodlight ministry that seeks to shine the brightest light possible on who Jesus is and what he has come to do.

This is our rock-solid assurance as we think about the Holy Spirit. He is a spotlight for Jesus. Not Jesus as an idea or a religious leader, but Jesus as our Crucified and Resurrected King. We can be as assured of the Spirit's presence and power as we are of Jesus' empty tomb. These are the things John has in mind when he records Jesus, saying, "He will glorify me."

So, yes, the Spirit still works mysteriously; he heals, delivers, sets free from demonic oppression, and prompts people to speak in special ways; and yes, the Spirit uses the details and depths of God's Word and even big theology books to stir in our minds and hearts in a special way, but to what end? Why? What's the reason behind all the other reasons? SO THAT Jesus will be seen as awesome and worthy. Jesus said, "He will bring to mind all that I've said. He will bear witness about me. He *will glorify* me."

This means that we need to go for it. Be loud and happy and emotional and expressive and spontaneous in your life of worship, but do it in a way that glorifies Jesus and not yourself. And also, memorize Scripture, be a Bible nerd, have too many theology books on your nightstand, but do it in a way that glorifies Jesus and not yourself. The Spirit's job is to make us like Christ by shining the brightest possible spotlight on the grace *and* truth that he is and that he offers. And we can't do this on our own. We need the Spirit as our Helper.

And so, with the foundation that the Spirit's job of pointing to Jesus, and our responsibility to tune in to the Spirit, here are ten ways for us to further sense him moving, leading, growing, and using us for Jesus' sake. The biggest answer to our question about confidence in the Spirit is Jesus. But how should we do it practically? Here are ten quick suggestions.

- Admit you need help. If he's the Helper, and you think you can do it on your own, you'll exhaust your soul trying to put the Holy Spirit out of a job. Go to counseling, confess your sin, don't defend yourself, and ask people about your blind-spots. It's here that the Holy Spirit shows up big time and does some of his finest work. Admit your need.
- Bear the fruit of the Spirit. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Think about them. Pray about them. Read the gospels, and see these things in Jesus' life. The Spirit is seeking to glorify Jesus, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit is about the character of Jesus flowing through our lives.
- Discover your gifts. Every Christian has them. Read 1 Corinthians 12-14. Get around people who know their gifts and are exercising them humbly. Discern how the Spirit has wired you and specifically placed you in the body of Christ, and then live it out.
- Reject fear. In John 14:27, fear is the way that the world gets things done; it's the Unholy Spirit of the world. If you're led by fear, you're not led by the Spirit. And the Spirit is part of God's perfect love that wants to cast out all fear.
- Obey, if you don't understand. Sometimes in the Psalms, David says, "I understand, therefore I obey." But sometimes he says, "I obey so that I might have understanding." This second one is hard for us. We're often too entitled to obey if we can't grasp why we should. It requires more faith than we're comfortable with. But either the Spirit the Comforter or is he not?
- Pray out loud. Jesus was perfectly yielded to the Spirit, and right after the Upper Room in John 17, he prays out loud. We can't trap the Spirit in our minds where our thoughts are prone to wander. One of the main evidences in the entire New Testament of the Spirit's movement is what people say with actual words to others. So, praying out loud is a version of this.
- Turn down the volume of your life. If the Spirit is the voice of God, maybe your life is too loud and busy and cluttered with other voices. Maybe you can't hear the Spirit's voice in Scripture, in your heart, in corporate worship, in others, and in creation because you are so distracted. So, perhaps we need to make space to turn down the volume of life so that we can hear more clearly what the Spirit is saying.
- Suffer well, in humility and hope. This is exactly what Jesus did. This is what Jesus' Spirit-led followers did in Acts. One day, by the Spirit, we will have resurrected bodies just like Jesus, and the pain of today will be a

forgotten memory like a buried grain of sand on the ocean floor. So, the Spirit can help us to be like Jesus and suffer well.

- Sing truth. After Jesus was done teaching about the Spirit, 30 minutes from John 14 in Upper Room time, they sang a hymn together. Paul says, “Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. When we’re all perfectly in tune with the Spirit in the New Heavens and New Earth, Revelation shows us singing. And if he’s the Spirit of truth, we need to be singing of truth.
- Trust Jesus as your Advocate. Jesus says, “The Father will give you another Paraclete,” and that means that there’s already a Paraclete, and it’s Jesus. 1 John 2 says, “If anyone sins, we have an Advocate (“parakletos”) with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” He is the only one who can come to our Rescue in the divine courtroom of eternity. He is the only eternal source of Help and Hope and Comfort and Peace before the Father, and we experience those things through the Spirit as The Paraclete. The early church Father Irenaeus said that the Son and the Spirit are the two loving hands of the Father in the world, ready to embrace those who come to him in faith. And we can see this in John’s term Paraclete.

Confidence in the Spirit is strengthened when we have confidence in Christ. We must trust Jesus as our Advocate – our Holy Go-Between, our sin-forgiving Mediator. Believing God’s promises of who Jesus is and what he has done will give us clarity and conviction about who the Spirit is what he *is doing* right now. Just as the Spirit testifies to us who Jesus is, so now we are to testify to the world the grace and truth, justice and peace, and patience and love of Jesus Christ the Righteous. And that is an impossible task. This is why we need a Helper.

Discussion Starters —

- What stood out to you the most about this message?
- What is something confusing to you about the Holy Spirit?
- Who is someone you know who lives in humble confidence in the Spirit?
- How does Jesus talk about his relationship with the Spirit in John 14-16?
- What does Jesus mean when he says, “The Spirit will glorify me”?
- Which of the ten suggestions causes you to most sense the Spirit at work?
- Which of the ten suggestions is most challenging or convicting to you?