

## **The Benefit of Christ's Departure**

Scripture: John 16:1–11

Code: 43-88

The gospel of John is the history of our Lord's life and a presentation of His deity as God in human flesh. This is a beloved book of the New Testament, the fourth gospel. We are all the way into chapter 16, which means that we have come through the life of Christ to the very hours before His crucifixion.

In chapter 13, we are taken into the upper room on Thursday of Passion Week, Thursday night – the upper room meeting of the disciples with our Lord for Passover. Judas was dismissed from the Passover meal to go and do his betrayal, and the eleven disciples remained with Jesus and He spoke to them, and what He said to them is contained in John 13, 14, 15, and 16. It is a treasure beyond all treasures. It is the legacy of Christ, not only to His eleven disciples, but all who would come after them.

And then in chapter 17, He prayed that same night a prayer to the Father, which is recorded there, in which He asked the Father to fulfill these promises, not only to the eleven, but to all who would believe to come. So here we have the words of our Lord to His own, to us, to His beloved redeemed children.

It has been, up until verse 18 of chapter 15, a night of love. Everything has basically been around the love that the Lord has for His own. It started out in chapter 13, verse 1, with a statement that "He loved them to perfection." And then all of the promises and blessings and gifts of His love are described and promised one after another, after another, after another. Heaven lavishes loving promises on the disciples and the followers of Christ. So I've been saying it, up to this point, an evening of love.

But all of a sudden in verse 18, it turns to hate, and our Lord moves from talking about the blessings of heavenly love to the realities of earthly hatred; and I want to pick it up and read it again. I'm going to read verse 18 down through the seventh verse of chapter 16.

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you're not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they've done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is Spirit of truth who

proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning. These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

“But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Holy Spirit will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”

And so an evening of love turns to an evening of hate in the sense that the subject shifts from heavenly love to earthly hatred. And this is the world in which the followers of Christ have always lived: loved by God, lavished with promises from heaven, blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, and hated by the world. The whole world lies in the lap of the evil one. He hates God, hates Christ, hates the Bible, hates the gospel, hates the church, hates believers. So we live in a world where we are divinely loved and supernaturally hated as well, where God pours out all the privileges of heaven on us, and Satan energizes the world to persecute us.

There’s so much talk today about the persecution of Christians, even in the media. It isn’t just Christians who are talking about the persecution of Christians; politicians are talking about the persecution of Christians. This is not surprising to us, this idea of persecution. This is a reality that believers have always faced, always. And because there are about 100 million people who hold the name “Christian,” 100 million being persecuted today, is no shock to us, not at all. It’s always been this way. This is exactly what our Lord said. This is a prophecy of what would be the reality through redemptive history.

The followers of the Lord Jesus have always faced the hostility of Satan’s system, and Satan is the ruler of this world. He controls the world’s system. And from the time of our Lord’s death, believers have suffered constant persecution: ridiculed, scored, denounced, hunted, arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and executed. The word *martyr* is a Greek word for “witness.” It has become the word for a person who dies under persecution. When you say someone is “a martyr,” you’re not saying they’re a witness, you’re saying they died. Christians then have redefined the word *martyr*.

Peter, James, and Andrew were crucified. Bartholomew was whipped and then crucified. James, son of Zebedee, was beheaded. Mark was dragged through the streets of Alexandria until he was dead. James, the half brother of our Lord, was stoned by order of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Philip was stoned to death. Stephen was stoned to death. Matthew, Simon the Zealot, Thaddeus, and Timothy were martyred; and Paul had his head chopped off. Those familiar apostles and leaders in New Testament times suffered what exactly was the prophecy here.

Clement of Rome, who died in 100 A.D., wrote, “Through jealousy and envy, the greatest and most righteous pillars have been persecuted and put to death.” It started out that way and it hasn’t stopped. The leaders of the Roman Empire persecuted and killed Christians during the first three centuries. The persecution of true Christians reached a high point during the Protestant Reformation. The Reformers were appalled by the moral, ethical, and doctrinal corruption of the Roman Catholic

Church, and they spoke out against those corruptions. They denounced the Catholic Church, the system of salvation by works, the purchase of indulgences, the corruption of the mass, the priesthood, Mariolatry, all the rest; and the response from the Roman Catholic Church was violent and massive persecution.

Historian John Dowling wrote *The History of Romanism* in 1845, and in that book he said this: "The Roman Catholic Church has put to death as many as 50 million heretics between A.D. 606, the birth of the papacy, and the mid-1800s."

A 1997 article in the *New York Times* reported that more Christians have died under persecution in the twentieth century than the first nineteen after the birth of Christ. And now, as I said - even now in this the twenty-first century - as many as 100 million people who call themselves Christians are under persecution. This is not a surprise. This is exactly what our Lord said was going to happen - exactly. We're not shocked at this. We're more shocked that people in America, and then the West, have for a few generations been able to escape this kind of violent persecution.

Again, it was the last night that our Lord had with His eleven disciples. When He gave them all of this truth, He was anticipating the cross the very next day, when He would bear their sin, die in their place, and ours. He told them He was going to leave; they didn't want to hear that; that made them sad. And now He tells them not only is He going to leave, but they are going to be persecuted. They're going to be thrown out of the synagogue, and they're going to be killed, and the people who kill them will think they're doing service to God.

This is a dramatic moment in that evening, because up to verse 18 of chapter 15, all that Jesus was saying was enriching, and ennobling, and elevating, and generating hope. But now they are told that while heaven will unleash its blessings, Satan and the world will unleash its punishment, persecution. They now have both sides: promised blessings and persecution. And the wonderful truth about these two and the reason Jesus talked about the persecutions after the promises is that they blend into one, they blend into one.

You say, "Well, how do they blend into one?" They blend into one because the promises are our hope in the midst of our persecution. With all the promises that we have received, with all the lavish heavenly blessings that belong to us and are provided for us through the promise of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we have everything we need in the midst of our persecution. Let me kind of divide that out: "The world will hate you," Jesus said, "but I will love you." I can live with the world's hate if I have the Savior's love.

"The world will be your enemy, but I will be your friend," our Lord said. "The world will persecute you, and abuse you, and kill you; but I will supply all your needs, answer all your prayers, and give you everlasting life. The world will give you trouble, but I will give you peace. The world will bring you sadness, and I will give you joy. The world will be under the power of Satan, but you will be under the power of the Spirit."

And this is where all of us as believers live. We live in this world, and the world hates us and heaven loves us. We have all the resources we need to stand against the hatred of the world, and more than that: to confront the world with the gospel for the sake of the salvation of even those who hate us because they hate God.

Now, we've come in our look at this section, down to chapter 16, for this morning. And I'm going to just have you look at the first seven verses here. Under two headings, the persecution of the disciples by the world, verses 1 to 4; and it's a bit of a repeat from what was said earlier, with an addition.

Look at verse 1 of chapter 16: "These things I've spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he's offering service to God. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. But these things I've spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you."

Back in verses 18 to 25 of chapter 15, He made it very clear that persecution was going to come in verse 20: "They persecuted Me, they're going to persecute you. All of this because they hate Me. They hate My Father, they hate you." Here He reiterates this persecution and shows specifically what's going to happen: they will be put out of the synagogue and they will be killed. They need to know these things so that they don't stumble.

Look at verse 1: "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling." "These things," referring to everything He said in chapter 15, verses 18 and following: "I told you all these things so you don't stumble." Forewarned is forearmed, right? "I've told you this so you're not shocked."

The word "stumble," *skandalizō*, is "to be offended," or perhaps better, "to be caught off-guard," or "to be caught in a trap," or "to be shocked." The figure of the word is that of a trap in which a crooked stick, a *skandalon*, holds the bait and springs the trap when touched.

So our Lord is saying, "I'm saying this so that you're not caught in a trap unaware," so they don't walk into something, and all of a sudden it springs and you're captive. And you wonder, "How in the world did this happen?"

"I'm telling you ahead, they will hate you. They hate Me, they hate My Father. You are being fully informed as to the meaning of discipleship. It is hard and it is painful," and He has said that. It requires self-denial, taking up a cross. He said those things earlier in His ministry.

Way back in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, He said, "Blessed are you when men persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely." In chapter 10, He warned them that persecution would come because "the servant is not greater than his master." But here it gets very specific; and it's attached to hate, and persecution, and being thrown out of the synagogue, and even being executed. "You need to know this. You need to be ready for this."

Imagine if they hadn't known this. Look, they all joined up with Jesus with the most grandiose expectations. They thought – and they were right – that He was the Messiah. They knew – and they were right – that the Old Testament promised a Messiah, a kingdom, that He would establish His throne in the world in Jerusalem, and from there would rule over the entire world. They thought they were the inner circle for the messianic establishment of this world kingdom. They had very elevated

expectations. They even asked and argued about which of them would sit on the right and left hand of Jesus when He ascended to His throne. Their hopes were very high, and our Lord had dashed those hopes, shattered those hopes, when He didn't do anything to establish any powerful presence. He did miracles, but they were personal and individual occasions.

Never did He turn His power to tear up the Jewish establishment or to free them from Roman occupation. He didn't do what they expected Him to do as a Messiah. And then He started talking about His death, and that He would be betrayed, and that He would be arrested, and that He would be beaten and spit on and crucified, and this began to frighten them. And Judas was so frightened, he got out and got the money he could get betraying Jesus, but the rest of them were equally confused and sorrowful over this - and discouraged and disappointed. And if He had never said anything about the persecution, if He had never warned them about it with specifics, and when He went back to heaven and the Holy Spirit came, all of a sudden the apostles started being executed, and the writers of Scripture starting to be murdered, and persecution broke out everywhere, they might begin to wonder whether Jesus, after all, was the Messiah. So to make sure that when all of that happened - they knew it was to be expected - our Lord tells them all these things, all these things.

In spite of that – and this is pretty true to form for them – in spite of the fact that He told them that, later on in the middle of the night - that same night now past midnight in the garden - Matthew 26 says, “After they sung a hymn in the upper room, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And then Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, “I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered,”’” (back in Zachariah). “You will all fall away because of Me this night.” Even when they were forewarned, just maybe a few hours at the most earlier, they still fell away.

Later in Matthew 26:55, Jesus says to the crowd that comes to arrest Him, “Have you come with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you didn't seize Me. But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.” And then this: “Then all the disciples left Him and fled.” The same night, though they had been forewarned that persecution was going to come, they needed to be ready for it, they were caught in a trap. They were trapped by what was happening to Jesus, and they fled, they ran.

That's reminiscent of how we sometimes are. The Lord gives us all the promises and all the warnings, and yet we get trapped and offended, fall into fear and doubt, and sin and stumble, and become confused. Our Lord has done everything necessary. We have all the promises, and we have the Holy Spirit whose purpose it is to fulfill all those promises. That's chapter 16, verse 14: “He will take of Mine and will deposit it with you.” That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the believer, to deposit in the life of every believer all the promises of Christ.

We have that. We have warning about persecution. We have a prophecy from the lips of our Lord that this is what is going to happen: “Don't be shocked. Don't be shocked that Christians are being persecuted today. Don't be shocked that you've been persecuted in your family or among your friends since you confessed Christ.” Jesus said He came to bring a sword to separate a man from his family: father, mother, sister, brother. It's what the gospel does.

But it's not just a family's ostracizing. It gets more serious than that. Verse 2 He says, “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, pariah, like a leper. You'll be “unsynagogued,” thrown out of

the synagogue. And they won't stop there. An hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he's offering service to God." The word is "kills you."

Now they're hearing, "Not only are we going to be persecuted, we're going to be thrown out of the synagogue, and now we're going to be killed." And the fierce hatred which the hostile Jewish leaders focused on Christ will pass to the followers of Christ. And the first thing that will happen to anyone who follows Christ is that he will be thrown out of the synagogue.

Go back to the blind man. The blind man you remember in John chapter 9. Our Lord healed Him, and later on in that wonderful account we read, "His parents," verse 22, "said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Messiah" - that is, Jesus Christ to be Messiah Christ - "he was to be put out of the synagogue." That was a powerful, powerful act - to put somebody out of the synagogue.

Chapter 12, verse 42 says there were rulers who "believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God."

What did it mean to be put out of the synagogue? Some of you would say, "Well, if I was put out of the church, it wouldn't make a whole lot of difference in my life. There's a whole world out there waiting for me."

But not in Judaism. If you were in first-century Judaism and you were thrown out of the synagogue, you were thrown out of the nation. There was no separation between the secular and the sacred. You were thrown out of your family; you lost your job; you lost your friends. You were a leper; you were a spiritual leper. You would be reduced, in many cases, to a beggar. To be thrown out of the synagogue, to be "unsynagogued," would be literally to be eliminated from the hopes and the prerogatives of being Jewish. You are a rebel worse than a pagan Gentile. You would not be given the privilege of an honorable burial. You were a religious outlaw.

This is the ultimate disgrace, and you would live in a kind of perpetual danger. That would be bad enough. "So that's what it's going to cost for us to follow You? That's the price we pay?" Yes, and more. "An hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God."

The people who have killed Christians through the years have done it in the name of their god - you know that. Man is inveterately religious to begin with. The early persecutors were Jews; they persecuted thinking they were serving God. The next wave of persecution came from the Romans, and they were persecuting Christians thinking they were serving their gods and Caesar. In the Middle Ages, the persecution that came against true Christians was persecution by Roman Catholics who had created their own deity and their own religious system, using biblical names but a form of Satan worship.

In modern times, the persecutor of Christianity across the world is Islam, and they think they're doing service to their god. Always religion is the ultimate persecutor of the truth because Satan is religious. He disguises himself as an angel of light; he works in false religion. The word Jesus uses here for "service" is *latreia*.

Back in John 10, when the leaders of Israel heard Jesus say that He and God were equals, they got ready to stone Him as a blasphemer. And the reason they finally put Him on a cross was because they saw Him as a blasphemer who, by saying He was God, shattered the reality of one God. They had no concept of God as a Trinity, three persons in one. And if Jesus says He is equal to God, then He has created a false God, and they had to protect the true God.

The Jews thought they were serving God. The Romans thought they were serving their gods. The Catholic Church thought they were serving God. Muslims think they're serving God. This is the word *latreia* here for "service" - is normal word for priestly religious service rendered at the altar in the temple of God - the standard word for service to God.

This could be a prophecy of one man, one man who thought he was serving God. His name was Saul, Acts 26, verse 9: "So then," he says, "I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities."

It was a religious rage going on in Saul, and he – listen to what he says about it in Galatians 1, verse 13 - "You heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it" - listen – "and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions." "The more Christians I threw out of the synagogue, the more Christians I killed, the more I advanced in my religion."

That was true with the Romans. That was true with the Roman Catholic Church. That's true in Islam. When you kill the infidel, you advance; you're a more zealous devotee. And all this happens because, though they are religious, they do not know God. I remind you of that - anybody in a false religion doesn't know God, doesn't know the true God.

I see Oprah has a new program called "Belief," and in that program is every possible, every imaginable and unimaginable belief, all put at an equal level. The only people who know God are the people who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who know the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is one with Christ. No man comes unto Christ except by the Father, and the only way to the Father is through the Son.

Religious people do not know God; they are under the total control of Satan. They don't know God at all. In fact, "They hate Me because they hate My Father. They hate you because they hate Me and My Father."

So He tells them this is how it will be - shocking, shocking! Understand, this is a small group of people. This is eleven and a small gathering of believers in Jerusalem - later on totaled 120. How in the world are they going to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world that hates Him, hates God, hates them, and wants to kill them all the way they killed Christ? How can they have any effective witness?

Well, I told you last time in verses 26 and 27 of chapter 15, He says, "It's the Holy Spirit who's going to empower you to give that witness." He says similar things down in chapter 16, verses 12 to 15, as we'll see in a couple of weeks. So this is a shock. This is a shock to these disciples. Verse 3: "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me."

Mark it down: persecution of Christianity comes from religion, and it comes from religion that doesn't know God or Christ. The false religions of the world - all the religions of the world except Christianity, true Christianity - all the religions of the world are satanic, and they all hate God. They don't know God; they don't know Christ. That is Satan's great deception. The Jews, the Romans - all the other false religions - have created their own god, a fictitious deity that doesn't exist; and the name of that nonexistent deity who is really Satan masquerading, they persecute Christians. So our Lord offers us not a way of ease, but a hard way, a narrow way. He calls for those who are willing to open their eyes to the venture and see it for what it is: denying self, taking up a cross, following Him.

Then in verse 4 He says, "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes" - similar to what He said in verse 1 - "you many remember that I told you of them," essentially reiterating what He said in verse 1. "I don't want you to be shocked. I want to fortify you in advance so that when it comes, you're going to know this is exactly what I said would happen."

Back in chapter 14, verse 29, He says, "Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe." One of the reasons that we believe in Christ is because He knows the future, and that is divine. Eventually Peter learned the lesson; and in 1 Peter, chapter 4, and verses 12 and 13, he wrote this: "Beloved, do not be surprised" - "do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you." "Don't be surprised. Don't be surprised."

And then He closes out verse 4 with this comment: "These things I didn't say to you at the beginning, because I was with you." What does that mean? Well, He certainly made some general reference to it in Matthew 5, and Matthew 10, and Luke 9, and He said, you know, "Blessed are you when you're persecuted. And if they persecute the Master, they'll persecute the servant." He said things like that in general, but never with this kind of specificity, and never unpacking this kind of hate to this degree. Why? "Because I was with you."

Well, what does that have to do with it? Because all the persecution came at Him. You don't read anything up to this point in the gospels about anybody persecuting a disciple; there's nothing there. It never says they persecuted Peter, or they persecuted James, or John, or Philip, or Andrew. As long as Christ was there, He took it all. It all came at Him. It all came at Him. The attack was directed at Him. If they wanted to stone anybody, they wanted to stone Him. If they wanted to throw somebody off a cliff, they wanted to throw Him off a cliff.

But now He's not going to be there, and all of that hostility is going to come to those who have His name. That's why Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of Christ: all the whippings, all the thrashing with rods, all the beatings with whips, all the scarring from the stones." All the rest of the things that he suffered, that he writes about in 2 Corinthians, were the marks of Christ. They couldn't hit Christ because He wasn't here, so they hit the one who bore His name. This is always going to be the case, always.



You can go into the book of Revelation, into the twelfth chapter, and look ahead to the time of great tribulation to come in the future before the Lord sets up His kingdom, and you're going to see the dragon who is Satan, and the dragon is going to be in a rage. And the dragon, verse 17 of Revelation 12, is going "to make war with the rest of the children" of the woman – this is Israel – and the offspring of Israel at that time who are believers, finally, in their Messiah. And he's going to make war with them, and he's going to make war with anybody "who keeps the commandments of God and holds to the testimony of Jesus."

So this persecution we're experiencing now is no different than the past. It's escalating. It'll escalate all through human history and clear into the time of tribulation. Satan will be fomenting war against the children of God, those who trust the Word of God and proclaim the testimony of Jesus. It'll be that way until Jesus comes to judge the ungodly and establish His kingdom. And it'll always be His people who are the target. "I didn't tell you all this earlier because I didn't need to. You wouldn't have been able to handle it, and I was there to take all the heat." So point one is - the persecution of the disciples by the world.

Quickly, point two - the provision for the disciples by the Lord. Look at verse 5: "Now I'm going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'"

I just have to stop there and say that's a sad thing. Our Lord suffered genuine grief. Oh, yes, back in 13:36, Peter had said, "Hey, where are you going, because I want to go."

And back in chapter 14, Thomas said, "We don't know where you're going, and we want to go." He told them, "You can't go; I'm going, and none of you says, 'Where are You going?'"

This is sad. This is really sad. This is selfish. He's comforting them, pouring out all of heaven's blessings, telling them everything that they're going to be receiving. All of His promises made there is deposited in them by the Holy Spirit. "And now I'm going, I'm going back to heavenly glory and none of you even has a small interest in what that means to Me." This is sad. Jesus is grieved. "You don't have any interest in Me, none."

Back in chapter 14, verse 28, He said, "If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father. If you loved Me, you would have said, 'Oh, Lord, we're so glad to hear you're going back. You've had enough, You've suffered enough, You've been through enough; we seek Your glory.'" No; no.

Why? Verse 6: the reason is "because I've said these things to you, and sorrow has filled your heart. You're just overwhelmed with your own personal sorrow. You can't get your eyes off yourself to get them on Me." Nobody said, "Tell us what it means for you to go back to the Father. Tell us what it will be like. Tell us what will happen with the angels in the presence of God. Tell us what it'll be like to - having accomplished all the work that the Father sent you to do - to go back and receive the reward. Tell us." But no one asked. No one cared. They were stuck on their own sorrow at the moment. They didn't ask Him about death, burial, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, coronation – not on this occasion.

Finally they did, after the resurrection at the end of Luke, the last verses of Luke. Luke 24: "He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, blessed them. While He was blessing them,

He parted from them, carried into heaven. And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God.”

They finally were able to rejoice in Him going back, but not here. And then, lovingly in His disappointment, He reiterates the greatest of all promises in verse 7: “But 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.”

He told them earlier, “He has been with you in Me. Better that He should be in you. He has been with you in Me,” back in chapter 14, “but it’s better that He would be in you. The Holy Spirit has been with you, now He’s going to be in you. And if I don’t go away, the Helper will not come; and when He comes, He will take all that is Mine and deposit it in you.”

Listen, folks, that is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit to the believer is a gift that heaven sends as a reward for Christ’s completed work. The Spirit can’t come until the work is done. The work must be done first before the Holy Spirit can be sent.

Peter said that on Pentecost, Acts 2:33, “Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of the God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.” Once He was exalted to the Father because He finished the work, died and rose again; then the Father sends the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The gift of the Spirit then is the pledged and promised reward for Christ’s completed work. So the Spirit can’t come until the work is done. The Holy Spirit comes in response to the finished work of Christ.

How could a group of persecuted, weeping, sorrowing disciples confront a hating world, a persecuting world? No way, except in the power of the Holy Spirit. And that’s back to 15:26, the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth...He will testify about Me, and you will testify also.” The Holy Spirit is going to power you to make an effective testimony against the enemies of God. “If I go, I’ll send Him; and when He comes - the Spirit - the Spirit of truth will enable you to reach the world. He’ll give you the power” - and starting in verse 8, we’ll see next week – “He’ll even work in the unbelievers.” An amazing passage to come.

So what is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the believer? He comes to make all the promises of Christ real. This is a majestic truth concerning the Holy Spirit as over against the ridiculous nonsense that is attributed to Him so frequently in the contemporary evangelical movement. This is elevated, majestic, divine, exalted truth concerning the Holy Spirit, and to think any less of the Holy Spirit than this is to violate the commandment. The commandment, which commandment? “Do not take the Lord’s name in vain.”

The Holy Spirit is the most dishonored member of the Trinity. People are slow to dishonor the Father, slow to dishonor the Son; seem to be in a hurry to dishonor the Holy Spirit. It is a devastating thing to dishonor God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – in any way, shape, or form. It starts with having a true understanding of His glorious work.

It is the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us alive so that we can believe. It is the Holy Spirit who grants us faith, who makes the gospel clear. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us life – we’re born of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who is now sanctifying us and will one

day bring us to glory. And how is He sanctifying us? By illuminating the Word of God and depositing in us all the promises of heaven. And He is to be worshiped for that.

For some reason, people seem hesitant to worship the Holy Spirit. That's ridiculous. We worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There's a lot of talk about worshiping God, and worship is directed toward God so often. And there's a lot of talk about thinking about Christ, thinking about the cross – the work of the cross, the work of redemption – and the Holy Spirit is forgotten. And it is He who is bringing us to glory. It is He who is conforming us to Christ, “from one level of glory to the next” (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is He who's in us, “to work and to do of God's pleasure.” It is He who “makes all things work together for good.” He is to be worshiped.

Father, we thank You that we've been able to gather this morning and look again at Your Word, and we want to worship You. And blessed Christ, we are so grateful to sing Your praises and worship You as well for all that You have done for us, all that You are. Blessed Holy Spirit, forgive us for lack of worship, for failure of worship, for thinking foolish thoughts, attributing things to You that have nothing to do with You, and overlooking the exalted, majestic work that You do - the transcendent, divine, heavenly work that You do of embracing us, living in us, giving us life, sustaining that life, depositing in us all the promises of heaven, strengthening us in the face of suffering and persecution, enabling us to confront a hating world and a supernatural enemy with all of his devilish forces, and communicate the gospel. Thank You for even working in the hearts of sinners to convict them of sin and righteousness and judgment.

We are so privileged, so privileged as frail, unworthy human instruments to be agents of You, blessed Spirit; to think that it is You in us accomplishing heaven's redemptive purpose. May we always honor You. May our thoughts of You be only those that are fitting, true, exalted, majestic. May our lives be filled with gratitude for this mighty, mighty work.

We thank You that You will one day bring us to glory. But in the meantime, You will give us all that we need. You will deposit in us all of heaven's resources so that we can stand against the persecution and still have love and joy and peace, and so that we can confront the persecution and the persecutors with a gospel that can literally break through and turn enemies into sons. Do that work through us as we are faithful, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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