

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 16:1-33

Key verse 16:13

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

We thank God that through John chapter 15 we could renew our vine relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. We realized that we need to be totally dependent on the true vine and that only by abiding in Him we may live a fruitful life. He has even made us His friends by revealing His eternal counsel to us. We want to abide in His love by obeying His command, practicing Jesus' love for one another, and dedicating our new lives to the work of making disciples and to world mission.

Today's lesson is a continuation of the speech in the Upper Room. In this passage, Jesus first announces persecution by the religious leaders. He teaches his disciples what the work of the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit opens the spiritual eyes of the world and he guides the disciples in all truth. Finally, Jesus teaches them how they may overcome all sadness because Jesus has already won the final victory and overcome the world. Today, let us learn about the work of the Holy Spirit. Let us be guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth and co-work with Him for the eternal salvation work of God.

1. He will open the eyes of the world (1-15)

In the previous verses, Jesus had spoken about the hatred of the world that would inevitably strike the disciples. Then they were to remember that the world had also hated Jesus in the same way. In the midst of all the persecution, they were to know that they were being persecuted for Jesus' sake, and that the Counselor was always with them.

Let's look at verse 1: "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray." Jesus warned his disciples so that they would not be tempted by the persecution and afflictions, but rather through this their faith could become stronger. The hatred of the world, the rejection and condemnation, are never easy to bear. But Jesus prepared his disciples so that they could stand firm in faith at the crucial moment.

Let's look at verse 2: "They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God." So far Jesus had been talking about the hatred of the world, but in these verses, he gets very specific and talks about religious persecution, namely being cast out of the synagogue and that they will think they are doing God a service by doing so.

This verse reminds us of the man born blind in John 9. Jesus had mercy on him and healed his eyes by putting some mud mixed with saliva on his eyes and sending him to the pool of Siloam to wash there. When he came back seeing, he was cross-examined first by the people, then by the Pharisees. No one wanted to believe that he had received his sight. When they demanded that Jesus be denied as a sinner, he said to them, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" Finally he said, "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." As the man born blind held on to Jesus' grace and witnessed it, he gained more and more spiritual insight. At the same time, the hatred of the Pharisees grew so that they expelled him from the synagogue. Apparently he had lost everything, both his religious and social position. But Jesus visited him and made him truly blessed, revealing Himself to him as the promised Son of Man.

It is a fact that persecution by organized religion is often even more severe than persecution by secular people. In Jesus' case, it was the chief priests who wanted to put Him away and demanded the death sentence, while Pilate actually wanted to set Him free. Saul thought he was doing God a favor when he persecuted Christians by snorting and murdering them. Jan Hus, Martin Luther or the Waldensians were all primarily persecuted by the organized church. Pastor Latzel was banned from preaching by the church organization even though he preached nothing but the Word of God in the Bible. We have learned that such kind of persecution comes not only from outside but also from within the church.

How could the disciples and how can we understand this kind of persecution? Verse 3 says, "They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me." Jesus said here that the reason is their spiritual blindness and delusion. They do not know who God is and who Jesus is. We may pray for the persecutors that God will open their spiritual eyes.

Let us look at verse 4: "I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you." Until now, Jesus had always been with his disciples and had protected them. Now they were to learn independent faith. Jesus admonished them to remember what he had foretold them. This teaches us that the best way to overcome the temptation of persecutions or the hatred of the world is to remember the Word of God that Jesus had given them.

Bible study is the best way to overcome temptation. When the apostles first experienced the harsh affliction from the religious superiors and were forbidden to preach, they remembered the Word of God and prayed on the basis of Psalm 2:1-2 that God would give them boldness to preach the Word of life in spite of all threats. (Acts 4:25-29) Persecution is inevitable. But when we remember Jesus' words, we need not fall into fear or sadness or even sink into it. Rather, we may come to Jesus and stand with determination on Jesus' side. God helped us in the time of persecution to hold fast to the word of God from Philippians 1:21, 1 Peter 2:9, Ezra 7:10, and Isaiah 6:13. When we did not concern ourselves with persecution but focused on intensive Bible study, we got strengthened spiritually. We received spiritual power to challenge

the work of God through Bible study and spiritual revival. At present, God is helping us to focus our hearts on the Word of God through Master's courses and Question-Making workshops, thereby receiving spiritual insight, comfort and strength to serve the work of God even at this time.

Let us read verses 5 to 7: "Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." Jesus had announced his imminent departure to his disciples. This was a time of uncertainty and sorrow for the disciples. They thought that now everything would collapse and there would be no future. But that was not the case. Jesus had great hope for them to raise them up as responsible spiritual leaders for His world mission work. They would now learn independent faith. The Holy Spirit would be with them, comforting them and strengthening them. It is a fact that Jesus' disciples become spiritually stronger precisely in the time of persecution.

Let's look at verse 8: "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:" The fundamental work of the Holy Spirit is to open the spiritual eyes of the world. The Greek word "elencho" used here means to convict, just as one convicts a defendant in court. Normally, people are very skilled at justifying themselves by comparing themselves to others, for example. But the Holy Spirit convicts people so that they can acknowledge themselves as sinners. He also convicts them about righteousness and judgment. The fundamental sin is not a moral transgression, but that they do not believe in Jesus. Unbelief is rebellion against God. But the Holy Spirit rebukes people so that they recognize themselves as sinners and come to Jesus. The Holy Spirit rebukes them about righteousness, that Jesus alone is righteous and makes righteous. He also rebukes them about judgment, that Satan is already judged.

Once Peter preached to a group of Romans in the port city of Caesarea. As he preached only God's Word, the Holy Spirit worked in them so that they believed in Jesus and were baptized immediately. Another time, the Holy Spirit led Philip to a desert road where he met an official from Ethiopia. He helped him understand who

Jesus is on the basis of the prophet Isaiah, so that he decided for Jesus. The Holy Spirit worked through the baptism Bible study in our next generation so that they could no longer give their bodies to sin but to God. The Holy Spirit worked in a young woman who had previously thrown away the Bible in rebellion. But through 1 Peter 4:13 she accepted Jesus and decided to participate with joy in the suffering of Jesus. God also worked through the Holy Spirit in each one of us so that we could repent of our sins and begin a new life in Jesus Christ.

Beyond that, the Holy Spirit has much to say to us. Let's read verse 13 together, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." The Holy Spirit is a Bible teacher who reminds us of everything Jesus said. At that time, the disciples could hardly understand the counsel of God. But the Holy Spirit later helped them remember Jesus' words and grasp the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection. The Holy Spirit changed the fearful disciples into courageous witnesses of the gospel who proclaimed it to the ends of the earth. Many of them died as martyrs. The Holy Spirit is the director of the world mission who enabled the apostles to bring the Gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, on to Antioch, and finally to Rome, to the heart of the Gentile world.

The Holy Spirit is not a feeling, but a person. His main work is to teach the Word of God, what he heard from Jesus or from God. A young man had many concerns of self-centeredness. But as he deeply studied Hebrews 5:8,9, the Holy Spirit taught him how Jesus learned obedience through suffering. That's when he overcame his self-will and decided to learn obedience and thus grow into a great man of God.

The Holy Spirit does not tell anything new from himself, but he takes it from what Jesus told and gives it to the disciples. In other words, he will teach exactly what Jesus taught before and what he received from God. Let's look at verses 14 and 15: "He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus. Here we see how the Triune God works. The Father is the Creator who chose us from the beginning. Jesus practically accom-

plished the work of redemption through his death on the cross. And the Holy Spirit teaches this redemption and spreads it to the whole world. It is a wonderful work of co-working in which everyone has his specific role. We can co-work with the Holy Spirit by deeply studying the Word of God for ourselves and letting the Holy Spirit teach us, and by teaching the Word of God to students as Bible teachers. Let's read verse 13 again, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. He guides us to embrace the gospel and fulfill God's plan of salvation by serving world mission. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that He has strengthened a servant of God with Philipians 1:21, that Christ is his life and death is his gain. We believe that the Holy Spirit is now guiding his exploration journey as well. Let us obey the leading of the Holy Spirit and study God's Word even more determinedly in this pandemic so that we can pioneer the 1700 campuses in Europe and the Muslim world.

2. Your sadness shall be turned into joy (16-33)

Let's look at verse 16. "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." Here Jesus again announces what is about to happen. The first little while refers to Jesus' death on the cross and burial, which would happen the very next day. The other little while refers to His glorious resurrection, which would take place in 3 days. His disciples, however, did not understand at all and were instead very confused. The synoptic gospels report that Jesus had already explicitly announced his suffering, death and resurrection three times before this time. But his disciples did not understand it because it did not fit into their concept and idea of Jesus. This time, too, they were confused. Jesus understood that his disciples wanted to ask him, and he explained it to them again in different words.

Let's read verse 20: "I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy." In Jesus' death on the cross, they would experience sadness and pain, but in His resurrection, their

sadness would be turned into joy. This is a joy that no one can take away from them. It is like a woman going into labor pains. Let us read verse 21: "A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world." Labor pains are painful and sometimes unbearable. But because the mother has hope in the new life, she can overcome this. As soon as she holds the baby in her arms, she is so happy that all fear and pain are forgotten again.

Let's look at verse 23: "In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." Through the resurrection of Jesus, we have a new relationship with the Father. We may now participate in the world missionary work of God through the Holy Spirit, asking everything from the Father in prayer. "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." According to the promise of Jesus, we may pray for a sheep, for a faculty, for a university, even for Europe or for the Muslim world.

Let's look at verses 25 to 28. Jesus told them once again in clear terms and without figurative language that he came from the Father and that he will return to the Father. Jesus is the holy Son of God. He is God who gives eternal life.

Now the disciples testify that they believed in him. But Jesus knew that at first, they would be scattered by persecution. But God does not leave them alone. In Jesus, the disciples can have peace. Let's look at verse 33: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." The disciples experienced hard tribulation and sadness when Jesus was taken from them. They were very insecure because they had thought that Jesus would soon become King. They were even more unsettled because the high council had condemned him to death for blasphemy. They must have wondered if the time of following him had simply been a big mistake and if they would now also be expelled from the synagogue. But they were allowed to have peace in Jesus. They could believe that Jesus had already overcome the world before them.

We also experience afflictions, especially during the time of persecution. Then it is easy to become full of fear, uncertainty and sadness. But we may know that Jesus has overcome the

world. His death on the cross is the redemption for our forgiveness and salvation. His resurrection means that he has crushed the head of Satan and gained eternal victory over the power of sin and death. Now we no longer need to be afraid, but we may live a victorious life in Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15:57 says, "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Even if we experience persecution, sadness or pain in the world, in Jesus we are the eternal victors who will inherit the kingdom of God with our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Through today's lesson, we have learned about the work of the Holy Spirit. In the midst of persecutions, He is our Counselor. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the world about sin, about righteousness and about judgment. Above all, the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth through Bible study. He helps us to overcome all temptations with the Word of God, to know God's counsel, and to cooperate for the work of world mission. Let us listen with open ears to what the Holy Spirit wants to tell us, that we will receive God's comfort and be used as the main persons of spiritual revival in Germany, in Europe and even to the Muslim world.