

## The Spirit of Truth

This article on John 14:15-27 is edited by John Lin from the Ligonier Ministries

It is not always easy to grasp the fact that the New Testament teaches us who live after the resurrection and ascension of Christ that we are in a better position than the disciples who had witnessed Jesus walking the earth. We are in a better position because we live in the day when the old covenant promise that the Spirit would come in His fullness has been realized. At Pentecost, Christ poured out His Holy Spirit on the church, the Spirit of truth who guides us into all of the Lord's revealed will (Joel 2:28–32; John 14:17; Acts 2:1–4).

The fact that we are in a better position today than the disciples were when Jesus walked the earth is an implication of today's sermon passage, which is part of a lengthy discourse about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Speaking to His apostles, who are about to go through a great trial as the Teacher is arrested, humiliated, and executed, Jesus encourages His followers with the news that He will be sending them another "Helper" (John 14:16). The meaning of the term Helper is multifaceted, but part of the sense is that the Holy Spirit will come as our advocate — as One who will stand with us and for us. At least partly in view here is the Spirit's role to stand with us in persecution to give us wisdom and the strength to speak the truth even when our lives might be on the line (Matt. 10:16–22).

Jesus ties the new covenant experience of the Holy Spirit to our love for Him that manifests itself in obedience to His commands (John 14:15, 18–24). It is not that by our love we earn the gift of the Spirit, only that loving Christ is more than just words. The Holy Spirit, because God first loved us, puts love for Jesus in our hearts and makes us willing to follow His way (3:1–8; 1 John 4:19). In turn, as we exercise this love, we enjoy a fuller experience of the Spirit's peace, grace and power.

This fuller experience includes a deeper knowledge and experience of the Lord's truth and peace. In John 14:26, Jesus says the Holy Spirit will teach us all things and remind us of all He has taught. In context, since the first hearers of these words were the apostles, Christ is probably referring primarily to the inspiration of these apostles to write sacred Scripture. Secondly, He is speaking of the Spirit's ministry to illumine the Word so that we might understand it, recall it when needed, and put it into practice. Finally, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we will experience truth peace in Christ Jesus. It is a peace that drives out fear even in trouble times.

The ministry of the Spirit is not to reveal new things outside of Scripture but to teach us all that our Savior taught. Learning to hear the Spirit is a lifelong task of reading His Word and developing our ability by this Word to discern truth from error. We can be confident that the Spirit will help us do this as we approach the Scriptures with humility, in the context of Christ's church, and ask Him to open them up to our minds and hearts.