

John 16 • The Work of the Helper

Introduction

A common problem where Bible study is concerned, especially when examining the root cause of a false teaching, is that instead of examining what the whole counsel of God's Word has to say, only selected passages are used to make a case. It can look like it's biblically sound until those parallel passages are examined which contradict what is presented. When it comes to spiritual gifts and the working of the Holy Spirit, this is often experienced when the discussion is mainly isolated to Paul's discourse in 1 Corinthians 12. Aside from the fact that his teaching is actually the whole of 1 Corinthians 12-14, there is the additional issue of all that the rest of the New Testament teaches about the role and function of the Holy Spirit. John 16 is a valuable foundation for teaching us about the Holy Spirit's separate role and purpose for believers versus the world.

¹"These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. ²They 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. ³These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. ⁴But 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.

[Read v.1-4]

Q: What is the repeated phrase used in this opening paragraph which shows that Jesus is summarizing all of this night's teaching to this point?

A: "These things". (v.1, 3, twice in 4)

Q: The source of three of "these things" are Jesus and one is a worldly source. How does the text show a clear difference between them?

A: The one worldly source is devoted to something they will do, but all three instances attributed to Christ are things He has spoken. Where Christ is concerned, it is always about how obedience to His Word will overcome anything the world throws at us.

Q: What is the first reason Jesus offers for telling us "these things"?

A: "...so that you may be kept from stumbling". (v.1) The first and foremost intention is to strengthen our faith.

Q: How is the source of the second use of "these things" different from all the rest? What does it describe?

A: It is the only instance where Christ is not the source, but rather it is speaking of coming persecution.

Q: Who is the "they" which Jesus says will be the source of this persecution?

A: The references to being cast out of the synagogues by those who think they are performing a service to God indicates that this is going to come from those claiming a right relationship with God.

Q: What is the truth about such people from whom this persecution will come?

A: "...they have not known the Father or Me". (v.3)

Point: Persecution at the hand of the unbelieving world is to always be expected, but when it comes from within the Church we have to remember the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, that not everyone claiming to belong to the Kingdom of God is authentically saved and following Christ. They will most often use the terms and language of Christianity in the course of their persecution.

Q: Is this the first time Jesus ever spoke of persecution?

A: Jesus spoke of persecution for His namesake such as in Matthew 5:10-12, but here he is narrowing things down to an additional aspect where the source is not exclusively outright non-believers, but particularly from religious people.

Q: What is the third reason for Jesus telling us “these things?”

A: Not just we will not be surprised when they happen, but we will recall what was already spoken about them in the Word. We will know how to act when we “remember that I told you of them”. (v.4)

Q: How is the fourth reason different from all the rest? What is the purpose for that?

A: The others are things He said, but this is explaining why “these things” are only being explained now. This is because “I was with you”, an explanation that while with them He was their protection. However, He is about to go away, and is going to explain how they will be protected in His physical absence.

Application: *Nothing the world does can overcome a believer who puts God’s Word and ways into practice.*

⁵“But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷But 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. ⁸And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

[Read v.5-11]

Q: Why should they be comforted?

A: Although they have been living in the presence of Christ’s protection while He was physically with them, they will still be protected by the Holy Spirit when He temporarily leaves. Jesus actually defines this as an “advantage”.

Q: Why would this be an advantage for them and every age of believer to come?

A: Because for the believer the Holy Spirit is “the Helper” (v.7), but for the rest of the world He “will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment”. (v.8)

Q: What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit convicting the world concerning sin?

A: “...because they do not believe in Me”. (v.9) No one is supposed to deal with the issue of sin just to achieve being a moral person, but must deal with it through the cross in order to come into a relationship of faith with Christ.

¹⁸“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.” (Jn. 3:18–21)

Q: What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit convicting the world concerning righteousness?

A: “...because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me”. (v.10) The Spirit convicts concerning the truth of the resurrection of Christ and His impending return.

Q: What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit convicting the world concerning judgment?

A: “...because the ruler of this world has been judged”. (v.11) This is not speaking about final judgment to come, but rather showing the world system, and Satan its ruler, for what it truly is compared to Christ.

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¹²"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. ¹⁵All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

Q: How might these three things apply to believers?

A: The Spirit uses witnessing believers and God's Word to reveal to unbelievers their sin of unbelief, their need for righteousness, and that they are on the losing side of the equation.

Q: What is the bottom line difference between how the Holy Spirit works where the world vs. believers is concerned?

A: The Holy Spirit only comes to and indwells believers who have accepted Christ; to the worldly He only brings about conviction to lead them to acceptance of Christ.

Application: *There is no salvation without Holy Spirit-led conviction of sin and righteousness, the working of judgment in this life to save the lost. This is the actual working of the Gospel and the role of the Holy Spirit to the world.*

[Read v.12-15]

Q: Whereas the previous section detailed the working of the Holy Spirit in the world, how has the emphasis changed in this section?

A: This is showing how the Holy Spirit works in the life of each believer.

Q: What does the Holy Spirit NOT do?

A: "...He will not speak on His own initiative". (v.13)

Q: How does He instead operate?

A: "...whatever He hears, He will speak...He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you". (v.13, 15) The Holy Spirit takes His leading from the Father and the Son. All three members of the Godhead are in lockstep agreement where the Word is concerned.

Q: What is the list of works provided here?

1. "...He will guide you into all truth..." (v.13)
2. "...He will disclose to you what is come". (v.13)
3. "He will glorify Me..." (v.14)
4. "...He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you". (v.15)

Application: *Compare this list with how you define the role and purpose of the gifts of the Spirit. [Open for group discussion.]*

Q: Is this the first time Christ has mentioned a kind of teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit?

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 said to you. (Jn. 14:26)

²⁶"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, (Jn. 15:26)

Application: *The role of the Holy Spirit in each individual believer is the continual working of the Word to not just guide us into all truth, but so that it ultimately glorifies Christ.*

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¹⁶“A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.”

¹⁷Some of His disciples then said to one another, “What is this thing He is telling us, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father?’” ¹⁸So they were saying, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is talking about.”

¹⁹Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, “Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me’? ²⁰Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. ²¹Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. ²²Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

²³“In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. ²⁴Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

[Read v.16-24]

Q: What is the literal meaning of no longer seeing Jesus for a while but then seeing Him again?

A: He will literally go away upon His Crucifixion and Death, but after three days they will literally see Him again upon His Resurrection.

Q: Given the context of what Jesus has been speaking about, what might the spiritual meaning be?

A: Even after He ultimately departs in the Ascension some forty days after His Resurrection, they will “see” Him because of the Holy Spirit indwelling within them, because the Spirit will “bring to your remembrance all that I said to you”. (Jn. 14:26)

Q: What is the “bad news” Jesus readily admits to?

A: “...you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice...” (v.20)

Q: What is the “good news”?

A: “...your grief will be turned into joy”. (v.20)

Q: Why might the example of the woman in labor have a particularly powerful meaning for believers?

A: Believers are described as “born again”. This metaphor not only addresses the issue that in the end a time of great sorrow is overcome by ending in a result of tremendous joy and victory, but parallels the working of salvation. The pain and suffering of what came before the cross is overshadowed by our changed life going forward, as well as the fact that this life has now been replaced with the promised and certainty of what is to come in the next.

Q: What is the greater meaning of the assertion, “In that day you will not question Me about anything”?

A: This ties into the main purpose established in the opening section to this discourse, that the ultimate goal is a steadfast faith.

Q: After 3-1/2 years with Christ, how can it be said “you have asked for nothing in My name”?

A: Having always been present with them, their usual practice was to take their needs and questions to Jesus personally. When He temporarily departs, one of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit is going to be assisting believers in prayer.

²⁶In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Rom. 8:26–28)

Application: The role of the Holy Spirit in each individual believer is establishing a steadfast faith inseparable from their prayer life.

²⁵“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. ²⁶In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; ²⁷for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. ²⁸I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”

[Read v.25-28]

Q: What is “in that day” referring to?

A: It is answered in the previous verse as that time in the near future when “I will no longer speak to you in figurative speech”. (v.25)

Q: When, exactly, is that going to take place?

A: Upon His Resurrection, He will impart the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:22) and open their minds to the whole of God’s Word. (Lk. 24:44-45)

Q: What does Jesus say is the qualification for someone to be heard by God the Father?

A: “...because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father”. (v.27) Jesus further stipulates that the Father’s reciprocal response to those who love and believe in Christ is that “the Father Himself loves you”.

²⁰But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. (Jude 20–21)

Q: What explanation did the Apostle James give for experiencing poor results from our prayer?

A: “...you ask from the wrong motives”. It is when we are actually seeking to satisfy our self rather than seeking to glorify Christ.

³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. (James 4:3)

Application: Biblical prayer to the Father takes place in the Spirit through the Son. A right and proper prayer life is inseparable from a right and proper relationship with Christ.

[At the Group Leader’s Discretion if time allows]

Discuss each of the seven “ask in My name” references in the past few chapters and how they might both related to each other as well as the bottom-line teaching they combine into:

1. ¹³“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, **so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.** (Jn. 14:13)
2. ¹⁴“If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. (Jn. 14:14)
3. ⁷“**If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you,** ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (Jn. 15:7)
4. ¹⁶“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would **go and bear fruit,** and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. (Jn. 15:16)
5. ²³“In that day **you will not question Me about anything.** Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. (Jn. 16:23)
6. ²⁴“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, **so that your joy may be made full.** (Jn. 16:24)
7. ²⁶“In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; ²⁷for the Father Himself loves you,

because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. (Jn. 16:26–27)

How do these things combine to teach us the true nature of a biblical prayer?

²⁹His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. ³⁰Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.”

³¹Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? ³²Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. ³³These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

[Read v.29-33]

Q: In what is the disciples’ faith ultimately rooted?

A: It is rooted in recognizing the truth of Christ’s Word.

Q: What are the things mentioned here which prove someone recognized the truth of Christ’s Word?

1. “...we know that You know all things...” (v.30) There is no wisdom, knowledge or discernment apart from the Word of Christ.
2. “...we believe that you came from God”. (v.30) Christ’s Word has produced the ultimate goal in each believer’s life: faith.

Q: However, what is going to take place where the disciples’ faith is concerned?

A: It is going to be tested.

Q: What is the purpose of this test? What kind of trial is to be expected?

A: It is a test of faith. While still in the world there will always be tribulation, but every believer can have peace in spite of the circumstances because through Christ the world will be overcome.

Application: *The work of the Godhead in each individual believer’s life is ultimately the faith which overcomes the world.*

Overall Application

- *What is the true role of the Holy Spirit and how does this relate to the true role of spiritual gifts?*
- *How does this discourse from Christ provide the reasons why some Christians are nominal or even ineffective? How does it show how some Christians are pursuing the wrong things?*
- *What happens should the Holy Spirit be pursued with an equal accompanying effort where God’s Word is concerned?*
- *What is the inevitable outcome of adhering to the false teaching that someone with faith never experiences tribulation? What should every Christian expect where their faith is concerned?*