

The Holy Spirit Destroys Doubt

A couple of months ago, a reporter published a book. His name was William Lobdell. Now, the fact that a reporter published a book isn't that worthy of note. But the content of his book was. William Lobdell spent much of his life as an atheist. Then, he went away for a weekend on a retreat with a friend. And, by the end of the weekend, to use his words, he had "given in". He made his decision for Christ. And for a number of years after that he was a Christian. But, after eight years of following Jesus, he found that he had lost that faith. He didn't feel Jesus inside of him anymore. And he couldn't find any proof of Jesus out there in the world. In the end, doubt is what destroyed his faith. Today, he wonders if there is a God. And he wonders if he ever had faith to begin with.

It is important for us to speak about this man. Because in our lives we go through the same things he has gone through. There are times when we ask: "Is there really a God? Do I really have faith?" We are creatures with two sides. We have a new, living person inside of us, who knows who Jesus is and follows him. But we also have this part of us who is always in doubt. He doubts if there is a God. He doubts that Jesus is good. And, even if he is good, he doubts that he is good to *me*.

It is at those times when we appreciate the Holy Spirit. It is at those times when this silent, third person of the Trinity means a great deal to us. In the words we look at this morning, we see that the Holy Spirit meant a great deal to Jesus' disciples. Jesus told his disciples: *"John 14:25 'All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.'"*

Jesus promised to send to them the Holy Spirit. And this Holy Spirit would destroy the doubt that afflicted them. And just how would he do that? Jesus promised that this Spirit would teach them all things. They were filled with doubts: Where was Jesus going? Would we be alone? What would happen to us? Who is this Holy Spirit? They had so many questions and so many doubts. Like them, we too carry around with us doubts. We doubt that there is a God. Where's the proof? You can look through all the statistics and you will never find enough proof to convince you that there is a God. You can't find proof in the statistics. And you can't find proof in good, solid reason. For, by whatever way you prove that there is a God, someone comes along and uses your logic against you. You can't find proof for God in your feelings either. For, when you feel good, how do you know that that is the Holy Spirit?

We doubt that there is a God. And even when we know there is a God, our sinful natures come along and tell us that there indeed is a God. But, he's not on our side. Our sinful natures tell us that if God truly were on our side, then we would have some proof that his kingdom was conquering out there in the world. If he were truly on our side, we would have irrefutable proof that he was on our side. If he was on our side, then we would at least feel some confirmation of that.

But, at the end of the day, we have none of that. We have no proof. We have no proof we can find out there in the world. And we have no proof we can find in ourselves. What do we have? Jesus tells us: *"the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*

We do not have the stats. We do not have the unbreakable logic. We do not have feelings on our side. What do we have? We have God's word. We have the promise that the Holy Spirit will lead us into *all* truth. The Spirit promises to lead you into all truth. Now, when Jesus says this, I need to clarify a conclusion we might come to. The Holy Spirit gives to us all the truth we *need*, not all the truth we might *want*. God will not tell you how he put the universe together. He will not tell you what the next powerball number is. Those are not details you need.

What do you need? You need the Holy Spirit to destroy your doubts and fears. The Holy Spirit does this through God's word, the gospel. He gives to you the truth, not changing rules. I remember having a teacher in school, who whenever I would figure out how to get a decent grade in his class would change everything so that I had to relearn how to learn. God isn't like that. His word is true. And he doesn't change or contradict himself.

And even more comforting than this, the Holy Spirit gives us the truth, but he also gives us *all* of the truth. The Spirit does not treat us like Satan treated Eve in the garden. Do you remember what Satan said to Eve? 'You will be like God, knowing good and evil.' Satan spoke the truth, didn't he? But he used it for evil. Eve wanted to

know what it was like to *know* evil along with the good. And it destroyed her life and the lives of all after her. For we too know what it is like to know evil. We know what it is like to lie and have the shame of those lies catch up with us. We know what it is to be angry and have that anger turn us into evil people. We know that truth all too well. And that's exactly what Satan does. He tells us the truth. But, he twists it and uses it for evil.

The Holy Spirit does just the opposite. He tells us everything we need to know. And he uses it for our good. And even more comforting than that, he reminds us of what Jesus said. Hear again verse 26: *"26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*

How many of you have sinned. Then you have seen how evil your sins were and how much you deserved Hell instead of heaven. And, when you were on the brink of despair, you remembered God's word. You remembered the passage where it said *"1Pet. 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."* You remembered where it said: *"1John 2:2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."* You remember where it said: *"John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

The Spirit of God reminds us of all of the truth we need to hear. And so, the Holy Spirit destroys our doubt with all of God's truth. But the Holy Spirit destroys our doubt with another powerful weapon: *"27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

The Holy Spirit drives away our doubt by giving us peace. And notice what sort of peace this is. It is not the sort of peace the world has or gives. How many people were there out there who thought that they would have peace in owning their own home, only to lose it last year? How many people were there who thought they would find their peace in their pension and 401k, only to have it vanish last year? How many people were there out there who sought to find peace in the fact that, at least they still had their jobs. But, they live in fear of losing them even now? That is the sort of peace the world has and gives. It tells you that you don't need Jesus. To feel good, there's movies and games. To feel secure there's money. And then, God pulls the rug out and shows you what you really have if you follow the world: nothing.

The peace the Holy Spirit gives to us is not like that. It is real, true, genuine peace. It is the peace of knowing that I have forgiveness in heaven and forgiveness now. It is the peace of knowing that I have heaven when I die and even now. It is the peace of knowing that I have the full life in heaven, but even also now amid all my doubts, all my pains and all my anxiety.

That is the sort of peace we have. And that is the sort of peace the saints who have gone before us had. Do you remember the faith of the Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21-28)? She came to Jesus, begging that Jesus would drive a demon out of her daughter. And what did Jesus say in response? Nothing. She kept crying out to him. Then he told her: *"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."* She told him: *"Yes, LORD," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."* Jesus answered her: *"Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."*

This woman had peace from the Holy Spirit. And she didn't just have peace *after* Jesus answered her prayer. She had peace *before* too. She knew that Jesus was good and gracious. And she clung to the words of God even when God, himself seemed as if he hated her. That was the sort of peace she had. And that is the sort of peace the Holy Spirit gives to you.

So then, my brothers and sisters, when it seems as if God doesn't make sense, or even worse: when it seems as if God is your enemy; When it seems like all the doubts pile up in your heart like a flood rolling across Iowa, cling to God's word. For in his word, the Holy Spirit gives to you all of God's truth. And in his word, he gives you peace, peace this world does not know and cannot give, peace which gives you faith even amid all your doubts. Amen.