

Series: "The Holy Spirit"
Our Divine Helper

This is the third message in a series on the Holy Spirit. Last week, we saw how the Spirit gives life, and leads us. Today we will look at sections of the Gospel of John where Jesus uses a special word to describe the Holy Spirit and His work. These sections are located in chapters 14, 15, and 16 of the Gospel of John.

We start by reading John 14:15-17a: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth...". The word "Advocate" is the translation used in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Other translations use the words "Counselor" or "Helper". The Greek word is "parakletos". It is a word that is difficult to translate into English. It means "someone called in to help." It could be somebody called into law court to testify on one's behalf, or an expert called in to give advice in a difficult situation, or a person called in to give new courage to a group that's disheartened. This is the role of the Holy Spirit!

Jesus promised that when He went back to the Father in heaven, the *parakletos*, the Holy Spirit, would be called in to help. Notice, in verse 16 Jesus says He will ask the Father to give them **another** Advocate, or Helper. The Greek word for another, *allon*, means another of the *same kind*.

If the Spirit was to be "another" Helper, who was the original Helper? It was Jesus! Think of all the ways Jesus was an Advocate or Helper to His disciples! He always knew exactly what to do. When they were not sure what to think or believe, He always spoke Truth. When their faith was weak, He bolstered it. When they were afraid, He calmed their fears and gave them courage.

But soon He was going to be gone! He would no longer be with them. How would they ever manage without Him? Imagine how *you* would have felt if your friend, your teacher, your master was leaving! We have all had similar experience. We lost someone we depended on: a husband, wife, parent, relative, friend. A beloved pastor, trusted doctor, special mentor moved away, or died. The disciples were going to feel sad and lost without Jesus. In John 16:6 Jesus says, "Because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts."

Jesus is saying, "I'm going to send Someone else *just like Me!* Another Helper, who will be with you not just for a while, but "to be with you forever!" (verse 16b). In verse 18 Jesus says to them, "I will not leave you orphaned; **I** am coming to you." Isn't this a tremendous promise for the church, for Jesus followers! The Holy Spirit is *Jesus Himself* here to help us!

If we continue with John 14:17: "This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you." He is called the Spirit of truth (I'll say more about this later).

Jesus says the world can't receive Him. It neither sees Him nor knows Him. Until we have surrendered our life to Christ, we can't have the Spirit nor understand His work. But Jesus'

followers know Him, because He not only is *with* us but also *in* us!

Let's move on to the next section in John where Jesus talks about the Spirit as our *parakletos*, or Advocate/Helper. It is John 14:25-26. "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."

This Helper "will teach you everything." How were the disciples to continue to learn when their Teacher Jesus was gone? Jesus would send another Teacher! The Holy Spirit!

One of the great works of the Holy Spirit is to teach us the things of God. He wants to teach us God's truths, the truths found in Scripture. This is why it is important when we study the Bible to ask the Spirit to reveal its truths to us. We can also ask the Spirit to give us a deeper understanding of the spiritual realm, and He will!

We can't comprehend spiritual truths by human intellect alone. The Apostle Paul knew this. Look at what he writes to the Corinthian believers: "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:9-14). In verse 14, where it says "those who are unspiritual", the word "unspiritual" really means the natural man, or the unconverted person. That is why, until we are born again, and get the Spirit living inside us, we will never understand the Bible and the deeper truths of the Christian message.

Also, in John 14:26 Jesus says the Spirit will remind us of all He has said. The Holy Spirit helped that little group of followers to remember everything He said to them. This is one of the reasons why we have the New Testament! Remember, there were no video cameras to record what Jesus said. People didn't even write down what He said for a number of years because they thought He was coming back at any moment. It is true that people in those days were accustomed to memorizing large amounts of material word for word – but still I believe the Holy Spirit was working to help those disciples remember what Jesus said.

There is another way the Holy Spirit brings to remembrance what Jesus said. We may find ourselves in a moment of temptation, or maybe when we're trying to talk to someone about

the Lord or our faith. or maybe in a time of crisis or discouragement, some word of Jesus, some promise, some teaching, pops into our mind, and helps us. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, helping us recall the words of Jesus!

In John 15 Jesus says more about the Holy Spirit as our Advocate/Helper. “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27). Note, Jesus says the Spirit will “testify on my behalf” or “bear witness of me” In a way, the Holy Spirit is an unselfish Gentleman! He does not draw attention to Himself. But He points people to the person and work of Christ. He is ever at work *making Jesus known and pointing people to Jesus.*

But Jesus also says here, “You also are to testify...” (Verse 27). The Holy Spirit wants to point people to Jesus, but most often, He uses someone to do that. We have to do our part in being a vessel God can use to help others come to Christ!

If you’re a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit wants to point people to Jesus through you. The good news is that God doesn’t ask us to share our faith, then leave us dependent on just ourselves to do it! He equips us with the Holy Spirit for that! Jesus said these words, recorded in Acts 1:8: “And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be my witnesses.”

Elsewhere, Jesus once told His disciples not to fear if they are brought before hostile authorities on account of their faith. The Spirit would give them the words to say: “When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak, or what you are to say; (for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” Matthew 10:19-20. Perhaps you can point to a situation where you were trying to share your faith, and maybe felt timid and inadequate, and suddenly the words were there! The Spirit is our divine Helper who assists us in bearing witness of Christ to others.

Let’s move on to more places where Jesus talks about the Advocate or Helper: This is found in John 16:7-11. “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.”

Jesus says it is actually *to their advantage* that He leave them! Do you think the disciples bought that? I doubt it. They wanted Him to stay with them! I can’t blame them! How often I’ve wished Jesus were right here in the flesh, If I could just have 15 minutes to sit next to Jesus and talk. “Lord, here’s something I don’t understand. Can you make it clear? I don’t know what to do in this situation. Can you just tell me plainly what your will is?”

So how can it be to disciples advantage for Him not to be there physically? When He was in

the flesh, His availability was limited by time and space. He may never have passed through your village. Or maybe you were fortunate enough one day to hear Him teach, but then He moved on, and you never saw Him again. *But He can be present everywhere through the Spirit.* We have that benefit today. If you are a believer, He's in you – always. He's in other disciples. Jesus is at work in the world, free of the imitations of time and space!

In the section we are looking at, Jesus says, “And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.”

When our Advocate/Helper comes, He will convict/convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. What is it that makes a person recognize their sins, grieve over them, and want to change? Why do some look at Jesus, executed as a common criminal, and realize He's the only righteous person who ever lived, and the only one who can make us right with God? How do some people come to realize that there is a judgment, and that Christ will judge all people, and ultimately win out over evil? *All of this is the work of the Holy Spirit!*

This has implications for us as try to communicate the gospel. I can't make anyone sorry for their sins and make them want to repent. Only the Holy Spirit can do that! You and I can't make anyone who's not a Christian want to follow the Lord. We can't create enough faith in anyone so that they'll trust Christ to save them. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. Sure, we need to do our part. I need to preach the best sermons I possibly can. We need to know what we believe, and learn the art of how to share our faith. But only the Spirit convicts people of their sins and brings them to faith in Christ.

One of the most important things we can do is to pray, pray, pray that the Holy Spirit will be preparing hearts and minds to receive the gospel. We ought to be praying in advance for Sunday School classes, small group meetings, Sunday services – that the Holy Spirit will move. We can be praying that the Holy Spirit will be preparing hearts of unconverted family members, friends, and neighbors to believe the gospel.

We will look at one more section in John's gospel where Jesus talks about the work of the Spirit as our “parakletos” or Helper. This is found in John 16:12-15. “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to guide the church and believers into all the truth. There is this Peanuts cartoon where Charlie Brown is visiting Lucy, who's at her psychiatric stand, offering her help for a nickel. Charlie says, “I need help – tell me a great truth. Tell me something about living that will help me.” Lucy asks, “Do you ever wake up at night and want a

drink of water?” “Sure,” Charlie responds, “quite often.” Lucy says, “When you’re getting a drink of water in the dark, always rinse out the glass because there might be a bug in it. Five cents, please.” Charlie walks away, “Great truths are even more simple than I thought they were.”

Well, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to guide believers and the church into the truth. *Where does this truth come from? It comes from Jesus Himself!* Jesus says, “He (the Spirit) will take what is mine and declare it to you” (verse 14). *The Holy Spirit will never guide any person or group to do anything which is contrary to what Jesus taught or how Jesus lived.* John Calvin once said, “The Holy Spirit brings no new doctrine, but teaches that which was uttered by Christ’s own mouth, and imprints it in our minds.”

Now, maybe you are thinking: Wait minute! If the Spirit is guiding believers into all the truth, how come over the years and centuries Christians and churches have disagreed over doctrines, beliefs, interpretation of Scripture – and even had big fights over it! Good question! It would have been easier not to bring it up!

The reality is that God’s Truth is always filtered through our human minds – which can be colored by and captive to our biases, prejudices, faulty thinking and ignorance! So, while it is of utmost importance to do our best to understand God’s truths, we always need the humility to realize no one person or group has all of God’s truth under their belt!

But, having spoken these words of caution, let’s not water down the word of Jesus that the Spirit will guide us into all the truth. So, when a couple of Jesus’ followers sit down to talk about their faith...when a study group meets at the church or in a home to study the Bible or a Christian book...when a congregation listens to a preacher preaching from the Word of God, the Holy Spirit longs to lead us into a fuller grasp of the truths of Jesus, and how we can live them out! *We can pray and ask the Spirit to do that!*

Isn’t it awesome to know that after Jesus left this earth, He came back to us in the form of the Holy Spirit, to be with us, and in us, and to be our daily Helper!

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