

“Understanding the Holy Spirit” (part 2)

John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15

This morning I want to return to the gospel of John, chapters 14, 15, and 16. We are looking at some verses in which Jesus assures His disciples of the coming of ‘the Helper’ who is the Holy Spirit who will come to indwell believers. The word ‘helper’ translates the Greek word ‘parakletos’ which means one called alongside for the purpose of help, comfort, strength, and guidance. It really is a wonderful description of who the Holy Spirit is and what He has come to do in our lives as believers. He’s come to help at every level where we need help. He has come to empower our obedience, to fill our lives with the presence and power of God. He is the ‘engine’ of your salvation, the movement, the inner life which the Christian has now come to possess.

Tim Downs — *“Watches, cars, and Christians can all look chromed and shiny. But watches don’t tick, and cars don’t go, and Christians don’t make a difference without insides.”*

And so you and I have been given this Helper. When you wake up tomorrow and are facing life’s challenges, realize that you’ve been given a Helper. Whether you’re facing the battle with temptation, experiencing doubt or depression, or you’re in the grip of pain and loss, or whether it is fear and a lack of spiritual desire. My friend, you have a Helper who is with you through every trial, and He walks with you every step of every mile. The Christian life demands we learn to yield to Him, we’re to call on Him, and rely upon Him.

He is ‘another’ Helper. The word that is used in verse 16 is a word that means another of the same kind. Jesus says the Helper will be to the disciples in the same way what He had been to them. His will and purpose, His strength and

power, His comfort and wisdom. The Spirit is just as much God as the Father and the Son.

He is a 'present' Helper. Jesus tells the disciples that this Helper will be with them, which means they will not be left alone to face the difficulties of life. Psalm 46:1-3 will then be understood in full light, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Our Helper is present.

He is a 'resident' Helper. Jesus tells them that the coming Helper will be with them and 'in them.' It would be a major shift in redemptive history, for at times in the past God had been with His people. His presence resided in the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle and Temple. The Son of God had been beside them for three and one half years. Jesus says that it would be to their advantage that He go away so that the Helper can come. And when He comes, He won't just be beside the disciples, but will live inside the disciples. It is better to have the Holy Spirit inside of you than to have Jesus beside of you, which is a truly amazing idea.

He is a 'permanent' Helper. Jesus says that He will be with you forever. He will not come and go like a visitor. No, we are a temple, not a motel. He comes to indwell the believer and is the seal of your salvation, and the guarantee of what is now yours in Christ.

Last time, we looked at **the person of the Holy Spirit**—He is a distinct person, a divine person, and a dynamic person. He is a person and not a force, to be referred to as 'He' not an 'it.' One of the things we immediately see in the words of Jesus is He doesn't say of the Holy Spirit, 'it' will come. No, He uses personal

pronouns, “He will,” Him, not it. And that is because the Holy Spirit is a person. He is a distinct person. He is a divine person, for He is the third person of the Trinity. He is a dynamic person, One come to energize our Christian life, and has come to communicate the love of Christ to our hearts experientially. A second thing that we learn about the Helper from this text involves:

2—The PURPOSE of the Holy Spirit (14:26; 15:26-27)

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and brings to your remembrance all that I have said to you... But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

Not only do we learn from Jesus that the Holy Spirit is a very real person, but notice that He tells His disciples how the Holy Spirit will serve a very important purpose. What is the Spirit’s main agenda?

He explains the truth of God

At least three times in these verses, He is referred to as the Spirit of truth—14:17, 15:26, and 16:13. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and it really is a wonderful description of how God works in our lives as believers. Think about how, by way contrast, Satan and his system constantly tries to feed us lies. John 8:44 says that he is a liar and the father of lies. This present world system is held within his grip of lies. Without God’s grace, man is blind in his sin trying to find his way in the dark, dead in sins and trespasses. The world with all of its supposed wisdom does not know God. You can take the wisest and brightest, the most elite and brilliant minds. And in spite of all their knowledge, they still

cannot find the truth. Like Pontius Pilate standing before Jesus, they're asking the question, "What is truth?"

2 Timothy 3:7—“Always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.”

That doesn't mean they can't understand certain things about how the world works mathematically, scientifically, or mechanically. But all they can do is make observations or come to certain conclusions on the basis of what they see. But the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:21 it pleased God by the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. In other words, you won't ever come to an understanding of the truth without believing what God has revealed by the Spirit of truth. You cannot reason your way to eternal life.

And you can be sure that the devil wants to destroy your life with error. Which is why you and I should be cautious and discerning about what we allow to enter our minds, the ideas, values, and beliefs which form our worldview. We live in a world that is constantly telling us what to believe about what is good and true. The battle ground is within your mind and heart. Christians must think differently than the world around them.

Romans 12:1-2 (J.B. Phillips)—“With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give Him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to Him and acceptable by Him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.

I don't want to be conformed to this world. I want to be transformed. How is it possible? By the renewing or the re-moulding of your mind from within. Which is why you and I need the Spirit of truth. He takes the Word of God and changes me. But the problem with a lot of professing Christians is they live life solely based on feelings, or they are only concerned about doing. The life based on feeling says, "How do I feel today? How do I feel about my job? How do I feel about my wife and kids? How do I feel about worship?" A life by feeling will never know the transforming power of God, because it ignores the renewing of the mind. The life based on doing says, "Don't give me your theology. Just tell me what to do. Give me four points for this, and the seven keys for that." A life of doing will never know the transforming power of God's Spirit because it ignores the renewing of the mind.

Don't get me wrong, God is never against the principles of feeling and doing. He is a God of passionate feelings, and He commands us to be doers. Yet emotions and feverish activity are an insufficient foundation for the Christian life. The primary questions cannot be, "How do I feel?" or, "What do I do?" Rather, they must be "What is true here? What does God's Word say?" And that is what the Spirit of truth comes to do in your life. He takes God's Word and brings it to bear on your mind and heart. Satan holds men and women captive to his lies. So many people today are hopeless, miserable, and confused. But Jesus has come to set us free, and His Spirit works in our lives by means of truth. I need the truth today for my mind, and it is the Holy Spirit who helps me know the truth. I need the truth today for my heart, and it is the Holy Spirit who helps me love the truth. I need the truth for my will, and it is the Holy Spirit who now helps me walk in the truth. He helps me know, love, and obey the truth! It is a sure sign that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit if he or she has a love for the truth. God's Spirit works

hand in hand with God's Word. Notice Jesus says down in verse 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 have said to you." There's a link between the instruction of the Spirit and the words of Jesus. The Holy Spirit takes the Word and enlivens the heart. The Helper would bring to their minds all that Jesus had said and taught. The Holy Spirit would make the Word come alive in their hearts and would apply it to their questions and calm their fears. The Spirit would lead them through the Word, and they would gain the ability to obey the Word by His power. Something else going on here is that the Holy Spirit inspired the words of Scripture. The Bible says:

2 Timothy 3:16—“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

2 Peter 1:21 —“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible, and every single word is important. We believe in the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture, which is to say that the individual words of the whole Bible are the words of God to us. The Bible doesn't merely contain God's Word. Friend, it is God's Word!

Joel Beeke—*“The words of the Holy Scriptures did not originate from men, but from God. Therefore, we may say that inspiration is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce the Bible through human authors so that it is God's Word just as surely as the breath of our mouths produces our own words.”*

The Holy Spirit inspired Scripture, but something else that He does is illuminate our minds to understand the truth of Scripture. Jesus says in verse 26, “He will teach you all things.” In chapter 16:13, Jesus says, “When the Spirit of truth

comes, He will guide you into all the truth.” To say He ‘illuminates’ the mind means that His work is necessary for our minds to grasp spiritual truth.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14—“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

Psalms 119:18—“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.”

Without the work of the Spirit, what is infinitely valuable is often dismissed. Have you ever had something that you thought was worth much, only to find out that it was extremely valuable? In 2006, there was a fisherman in the Philippines who made an amazing discovery, though he didn’t realize it at the time. He was on one of his daily trips out to sea when he became caught in a storm. The anchor of his boat got stuck on a giant clam. When he swam to free the anchor, he was surprised to find a large pearl inside the clam. The pearl was 30 cm wide (1ft), 67 cm long (2.2ft), and weighed 75 pounds. He brought the pearl home and kept it as a decoration for 10 years. His tiny home caught fire one day, and the pearl was one of the only things that survived. When officials discovered what the man had, it was certified and was estimated to be worth more than \$100 million.

Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, you can be sitting on a pile of diamonds and think it that it is coal. You can be exposed to the most glorious truth that could ever be taken up by your mind, and think it unimportant. There are some

things which are spiritually understood, and the illuminating work of the Spirit is essential for understanding to happen. Which is why a preacher has to recognize his dependance upon the Spirit in order for change to happen in the lives of those who are listening. I'm wasting my time this morning if the Holy Spirit doesn't move. A sermon would be nothing more than a mere lecture or a talk without the Holy Spirit's power. And friend, that's the problem with so much of what masquerades as preaching today—it is just a bunch of talk. I'm currently reading a book by Keeney Dickenson on the prayer life of Charles Spurgeon. The book is entitled, "Spurgeon: The Prayer-Powered Pulpit of the Prince of Preachers." I came across this quote:

Charles Spurgeon — *"A sermon is vain talk and dreary word-spinning unless the Holy Spirit enlivens it. He must give us both the preparation of heart and the answer of the tongue, or we shall be as men who sow the wind."*

Spurgeon said it is the Spirit of truth who makes dull minds, bright. He makes the dry bones, flesh. And only He makes dead men, live. Only with the Spirit comes an otherworldly power to our otherwise weak and mortal preaching. We cannot do it without His power! Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will come to explain the truth of God. Something else to know:

He exalts the Son of God

In verse 26, notice Jesus says of the Helper, "He will bear witness about Me." Then in chapter 16:14, "He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you." In other words, the Helper will come to exalt the Son of God in our lives. It's the work of the Spirit of God to always point us to the Son of God. He doesn't come to glorify the Spirit, but comes to glorify the Son. His purpose is to illuminate the gospel and bring glory to Jesus. Theologian J.I. Packer refers to

this work of the Holy Spirit as a ‘floodlight’ ministry that quietly focuses the attention away from Himself and to the Savior. Think of how monuments are lit up at night by multiple floodlights. The attention isn’t focused on them, but on the monument that they help illuminate.

I think that’s a very helpful illustration which reminds us what the Spirit has come to do. He has not come to make a name for Himself, but to make much of Jesus. A person who claims to be filled with the Spirit, yet spends most of his time talking about his own experiences with the Spirit, his spiritual claims are suspect. Because when the Holy Spirit is using someone, you tend to forget about the one who is speaking or singing or serving, and instead you find yourself thinking about Jesus. It is the work of the Spirit to keep the spotlight on the Lord Jesus. My friend, Jesus is the only celebrity in the church! Not the preacher, not the worship team, not us. Jesus says, “He will glorify Me.” He works to glorify Jesus through the witness of our lives.

Psalm 115:1 — “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth.”

The Spirit hasn’t come to stroke our ego, or feed our own narcissistic tendencies. And yet how many times have you heard misguided people trying to use the Holy Spirit as a means to some selfish end? Whether it is the ‘word faith’ movement, or extreme movements within Pentecostalism. I once saw this clip of a charismatic preacher claiming to speak in the Spirit, saying ecstatically over and over again, “I prophesy financial breakthrough, and debt shall be destroyed in your life.” And I thought how about preaching against the greed and materialistic way of living that led to that debt in the first place? Or the value of hard work and fiscal responsibility that pays its bills on time and is content with such things as

you've been given. When the Spirit of God works in a person's life, He humbles you and strips us of our pride and self-exalting tendencies.

The Helper will come to explain the truth of God, exalt the Son of God, and then notice:

He empowers the people of God

When the Holy Spirit comes, whom Jesus will send to His disciples from the Father, He will bear witness about Jesus. He will make much of Jesus in our lives. Then notice what He says next in verse 27, "And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning." The Helper will come to indwell and empower the disciples who will then 'bear witness' or testify of Christ. In other words, the direct result of the Spirit's empowerment in their lives will be a gospel witness, a life that bears witness of Jesus before other people. The Helper will come and give power to the witness and ministry of the disciples.

I think one of the most tragic verses in all the Bible is to be found in the aftermath of Jesus' arrest in the Gethsemane. It would happen only a few hours after He spoke these very words to the disciples. Mark 14:50 says, "They all forsook Him and fled." Just a few hours earlier, they had been so sure of themselves. They had been boastful of their loyalty to Jesus in the face of any potential opposition. And even after Jesus said that they would all fall away, Peter says:

Matthew 26:33— "Though they all fall away because of You, I will never fall away."

Have you ever made a similar statement, so very sure of yourself, so very self-sufficient? Of course, Jesus says to him, "Truly I tell you this very night before

the rooster crows you will deny Me three times.” Peter says, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny You!” And all the disciples say the same. But when it became crunch time, they all went AWOL. They ran off into the night when they were needed the most. And just as the Lord had said, Peter denies that he even knew Jesus, cowering before a servant girl while swearing all while Jesus was being beaten and held in a dirty dungeon just a few yards away.

But then fast forward to the second chapter of Acts. Peter is boldly preaching Christ before thousands. In chapter 4, after being arrested and imprisoned himself, looks all of the opposition square in the face and says, “We can’t help but speak the things which we have seen and heard. What is it that made such a difference in his life? The better question is ‘who’ made such a difference. And the answer is that the Helper had come! The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead had come to live within each of them and endue them power. They gave witness to His resurrection with a supernatural boldness. Jesus said it would happen:

Acts 1:8—“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

John Phillips —*“Here then are the facts. A divine person, whose dwelling from all eternity has been at the Father’s side, has been sent by Christ to earth to bear witness to Him, to be His representative, to be, as it were, His other self. This Almighty One, the personal Holy Spirit, armed with the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, has invaded this planet to exalt Jesus, hinder the working of Satan, rescue souls from Hell, energize believers, and stand alongside them as their comforter, counselor, and companion, empowering them, leading them, and using them. No wonder these men—powerless, afraid, and ineffective—*

suddenly became brave, convincing, and successful. Once the Holy Spirit came, there was no stopping them.”

This same Spirit lives today in the lives of each and every believer. Do you feel overwhelmed by those tasks to which you’ve been called? Are there times when you feel like you are in way over your head? Friend, you have a Helper. He has come to explain the truth of God to you, exalt the Son of God in and through you, and empower your obedience, your witness, and your service done in Jesus’ name.

3—The PRESENCE of the Holy Spirit (16:7-15)

“Nevertheless, 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. And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; therefore I said that He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.”

We’ve looked at the person of the Spirit—He’s a distinct, divine, and dynamic person. And then we’ve considered the purpose of the Spirit—He explains the truth of God, exalts the Son of God, and empowers the people of God. A final thing I’ll mention involves the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the world.

As far as the world around us is concerned, what has the Holy Spirit come to do?
Notice what Jesus says concerning:

The Holy Spirit's presence to reprove

Jesus says that He is going away, but will send the Helper to His disciples. Once He comes, He will dwell in believers and will go to work through their gospel witness to convict the world. Notice verse 8 says, "And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

"Convict" — *word means to admonish, reprove, refute, and convince; the work of a prosecutor in a court of law*

Jesus is telling His disciples that the day would come when the Holy Spirit will move beyond the nation of Israel and will work among people all over the world. The wall of partition that excluded the Gentile from access to God in the Temple will be broken down by the saving work of Christ. And due to Pentecost, the Holy Spirit will move beyond Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world. Wherever He goes, through the witness of the believer, the Spirit will convict the world of its sin, lack of righteousness, and of coming judgment. For if the Holy Spirit didn't do this the world would remain unmoved and unconvinced. Apart from this work of the Spirit, sinful and fallen humanity would never come to terms with the truth of his state before a holy God. What else would make a proud, self-sufficient person turn around to acknowledge their guilt, confessing that their only hope of mercy and forgiveness is through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ?

In a world that wants to make excuses for sin, or gloss over sin, ignore or minimize sin, redefine sin or call it something to make it not sound as bad as it is —the Spirit has come to convict the world of sin. It is the Spirit of God who uses

the law of God to disturb and arrest the conscience, to agitate the heart and bring it to a place of brokenness and of real repentance. The Spirit shows the sinner what sin is, and His work is to convict them of the fact that they are indeed sinners. He convinces me that my life has come up short of the target, my life has transgressed the boundary lines of God, my life has disobeyed the will of God, and my life has been lawless. And if things should stand as they are, then my life is ripe for the judgment of God.

But notice Jesus says in verse 9 when the Helper comes, He will also convict the world “concerning sin because they do not believe in Me; concerning righteousness because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” The essence of sin is unbelief. The world is under judgment because the ruler of this world is judged, and he holds men and women in the grip of sin through their unbelief. But the Spirit has come to convict the world and convince the world that Jesus is its only Savior! The Spirit points people to the Son. So that there is good news today for those who under conviction. To be made aware of the disease is to also be made aware of the cure. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved and forgiven of your sins, for the debt has been paid in full by the Lamb of God who takes away our sin and clothes us in His own righteousness.

The Holy Spirit's presence to reveal

The Holy Spirit will come to reveal the full truth of Christ's redemptive work to the disciples. Jesus said that He had many things still to say, but will do so once the Holy Spirit comes. This is what we now have in the letters of the New Testament. The Spirit would bring to their minds the things that Jesus had said, and they would write them down. That is what we have in the gospel accounts. And the Spirit will also come to guide them into all the truth, fully revealing to them the

implications of Christ's death and resurrection. It is this very truth that we find in the epistles.

2 Corinthians 5:17—“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

1 Peter 2:24—He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.”

My friend, thank God for the amazing person, purpose, and presence of the Helper! Understanding and welcoming the Holy Spirit as resident Helper will result in four big changes in your life. Pay attention to these:

- He delivers us from fear and loneliness

He is the presence of God with us and in us to calm all our fears and provide us with stability. Let not your hearts be troubled! Jesus may not be with you physically, but you've not been left to a spiritually orphaned life. He is now living on the inside if you know Him by faith.

- He provides us with spiritual understanding

Notice that Jesus tells His disciples how the Holy Spirit will teach them all things and bring to their remembrance those things that He had said.

- He leads us to faith in Christ

Do you know that were it not for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, you could not have come to faith in Jesus? He works to disturb the conscience, and He awakens with us a sense of awareness for our desperate of a Savior.

- He declares to us what is Christ's

Jesus said that when the Helper comes, He will take what is Christ's and declare it to His followers. The truth of what Jesus has done for us, the truth of our union with Him, and the truth of what it means to be secure in Him. All that the Father has is Christ's, and all that is Christ's is now ours—and the Helper has come to communicate this to our heart.

What Jesus promised is what you and I now possess as believers.

Billy Graham — *“This is the good news: we are no longer waiting for the Holy Spirit—He is waiting for us. We are no longer living in a time of promise, but in the days of fulfillment.”*