

JOHN 14.16: THE HOLY SPIRIT - THE DIVINE PARACLETE

Billy Graham began his book on *The Holy Spirit* (subtitled: *Activating God's power in your life*) with the following statement:

“Man has two great spiritual needs. One is for forgiveness. The other is for goodness. Consciously or unconsciously, his inner being longs for both. There are times when man actually cries for them, even though in his restlessness, confusion, loneliness, far, and pressures he may not know what he is crying for.

God heard that first cry for help, that cry for forgiveness, and answered it at Calvary.... God also heard our second cry, that cry for goodness, and answered it at Pentecost”

Or to put it another way: We need Jesus Christ for our eternal life, and the Holy Spirit for our internal life!

Today I want to focus on the Holy Spirit, and to do so in the light of the words of Jesus found in John 14.16: **“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you for ever”**

In the light of these words of Jesus, we can say three things about the Holy Spirit

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR HELPER

“He will give you another Helper”.

The question immediately arises: What kind of a Helper?

Literally, he will give you another ‘Paraclete’.

Paraclete is the Anglicised form of the Greek word (*paracletos*).

The word *Paraclete* is not often used today – but it is found in some of the old hymns of the church.

E.g. in our hymn book there is a 7th century Latin hymn translated by John Dryden in the 17th century, which has the lines: “*O source of uncreated light/The Father’s promised Paraclete*”.

In the NT the word ‘Paraclete’ is found only five times: four times in John’s Gospel, and once in John’s First Letter.

- In John’s Gospel it only appears in the so-called ‘Farewell Discourses’ of Jesus (John 14.16,.26; 15.26; 16.7) and is always used of the Holy Spirit.
- By contrast in 1 John 2.1 the term is used of Jesus.

Grammatically, the word ‘Paraclete’ is a ‘verbal adjective’: it comes from a Greek verb which means: “to call alongside”. I.e. the *Paraclete* is the one who has been “called alongside”. But ‘called alongside’ to do what? It is at this point that our English translations depart from one another and offer a variety of translations.

(a) "**Comforter**" (AV).

Older people, brought up on the AV, will be familiar with the translation of '**the Comforter**': "*I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter*"

Many of our hymns about the Spirit keep this translation. We sing for instance:

*"O Comforter, draw near,
Within my heart appear,
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing"* (from "*Come down, O love divine*").

Our: "*Our great Redeemer, as he breathed
his tender last farewell,
a guide, a comforter, bequeathed,
with us to dwell*"

But what do we mean by this term?

For us today a **comforter** is a person one who cheers up the sad & stops their tears.

In American English a **comforter** is a *dummy*, something you give a baby to stop it crying.

But this is misleading - it is not what the 17C English divines, who gave us the AV, meant by the word "Comforter".

For the word **comforter** is derived from the Latin "**fortis**", which means brave.

And in 17C English to "comfort" means to make brave, to strengthen.

In this sense the translators of the AV were right.

The Holy Spirit does make people brave. So Luke tells us that when the believers in Jerusalem were being threatened by the Jewish authorities "**They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim God's message with boldness**" (Acts 4.31). Peter & John had been forbidden to speak of Jesus, but they refused to be silenced - why? because the "Comforter" made them bold.

This original meaning of "Comforter" is found in the Bayeux tapestry, which in 72 pictures tells the story of King William & the Norman conquest of England in 1066. In one scene William is marching behind his troops with a drawn sword, prodding them. Beneath are the words: "*King William **comforteth** his soldiers*".

It is a wonderful illustration of the task of the Holy Spirit - the Holy Spirit prods us, incites us, and urges us on.

So the Australian New Testament scholar Leon Morris wrote: "*The significance of the word is not so much, 'there, there little one', but 'Up, guards, at 'em', It is not soothing syrup, but a clarion call*".

The Holy Spirit 'comforts' the church, in the sense that he drives the church out in mission. We see this in the Book of Acts.

Time and again it was the Holy Spirit who was driving the church out into mission.

The fact is that the Acts of the Apostles were acts inspired by the Holy Spirit.

How we need this same Spirit in our lives today - prodding us laggard soldiers of Christ into action – giving us the courage to invite people to church – to Holiday Club/Holiday at Home!

"I will give you another Paraclete", says Jesus, and when he comes alongside you, he will strengthen you for action.

(b) "**Advocate**" (JB; NEB & REB; NRSV; TNIV).

The Catholic Jerusalem Bible, the NEB & the REB, the NRSV, and the latest version of the NIV, have a different translation. They speak of **the advocate**.

Within a legal context, the term *paraclete* was used of an "**advocate**".

An advocate is a person who speaks on another's behalf and in their favour.

In our judicial system barristers often act as advocates, speaking in defence of their client, either arguing they didn't do it, or if they are clearly guilty, then putting forward mitigating circumstances.

In 1 Jn 2.1 Jesus is undoubtedly described in this legal sense as our advocate, our *paraclete*: "**If any one does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf** (i.e. an advocate) - **Jesus Christ the righteous one**".

Jesus is pictured as pleading our case in heaven, speaking to the Father in our defence

The question arises: does "*paraclete*" have that sense here?

Certainly there are legal overtones in John 16.8-11 where Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will "**prove** [older versions: *convict*] **to the people of the world that they are wrong about sin and about what is right and about God's judgement**" - however there the Holy Spirit is portrayed more acting as a prosecuting counsel rather than speaking as defence counsel.

If there are legal connotations here in Jn 14, then the Holy Spirit is depicted as our defence counsel here on earth - giving us wisdom as to what to say when they find themselves placed in difficult situations.

This is reminiscent of words of Jesus found in Mk 13.11: "**When you are arrested and taken to court, do not worry beforehand about what you are going to say; when the time comes say whatever is then given you. For the words you speak will not be yours; they will come from the Holy Spirit**".

Jesus promises that when our backs are against the wall because of our stand for him, his Spirit will be there to help. He promises that when people make fun of us at work or at school, when people ask why we go to church, what difference Jesus makes to our lives, his Spirit will be there – helping us to speak up for Jesus.

I will give you an "**Advocate**", who will enable you to speak up for me. There's a promise to count upon!

(c) "**Counsellor**" (RSV; NIV)

The version I grew up with (RSV) translated "**Counsellor**" - so also NIV.

Unfortunately today when we think of 'counsellors', we tend to think of people who are there to help us to understand ourselves - who begin each session asking "*How do you feel today? What kind of a week have you had?*"

But the Holy Spirit is not a Counsellor in the non-directive psycho-therapeutic mould.

He is not there in the first place to help us understand ourselves.

Rather he is there to "**lead (us) into all the truth**" (16.12).

Perhaps a better translation would be "**consultant**" or '**Advisor**'.

Hey, that's a thought. Jesus in promising us the Spirit, promises to give us our own "personal consultant", free of charge - a divine expert who is more than happy to advise us, if we will but be open to his guidance.

What is true of us as individuals is, of course, true of us as a church.
When we come together in Church Meeting we pray for the Holy Spirit's help to enable us to discover God's way for our life together.
Church meetings are not an exercise in democracy - but rather a form of theocracy.
We come not to discover the mind of the meeting, but the mind of Christ. And for this we need the help of the "**Counsellor**".

(d) **Friend** (The Message)

Eugene Peterson in his paraphrase speaks of the Paraclete as our '**Friend**': "*He'll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you*".
Jim Packer (Keep in Step with the Spirit 61) similarly speaks of the Paraclete as a friend, but calls him our '*Senior Friend*'.

A friend is one who stands by us (see JB Philips: "*He will give you someone else to stand by you, to be with you always*"); one who gives advice and support.
And, of course, that is true of the Spirit.
But the term 'Paraclete' is not normally used of a friend.

(e) "**Helper**" (GNB)

The Good News Bible speaks of the Paraclete as our **Helper**.
"**The Father ... will give you another Helper**".
This links in with what Paul says about the Holy Spirit in Rom 8.26: "**The Spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are**".
The fact is that none of us are strong enough to be self-sufficient
We need God's Spirit in our lives to cope with all life's challenges.

For me this is the best of translations, because it is open to every nuance.

- The Holy Spirit helps us, by giving us courage to witness to the Lord Jesus.
- In difficult situations he helps by, giving us the right words to say.
- When faced with complex decisions, he is there as our own personal consultant, ready to guide and advise
- Full of wisdom, he is there to help us as a Senior Friend.

"He will give you another *paraclete* - another helper"

The Holy Spirit is given to help us - to help us to "cope" with all the challenges that life throws our way.
What a great gift God gives us!

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SPIRIT OF JESUS

"He will give you ANOTHER helper/paraclete..." (Jn 14.16)

Have you ever wished you had been around when Jesus was here?

Just imagine what it would have been like to have been able to see him and hear him;

and most importantly of all, to have been able to turn to him for help.

The good news is that Jesus is with us – he is with us by his Spirit. The same kind of help he gave to men & women long ago, he offers to you & me today.

For Jesus, speaking of God's gift of the Spirit, said: **"He will give you another helper"** - or more accurately: **"another helper just like me"**.

Gk has two words for **"another"** - two words which although similar in meaning, had subtle differences of meaning.

- One word (*heteros*) = *"another of a different kind"*.
- The other word (*allos*) = *"another of the same kind"*.

E.g. I will give you another book....

Jesus speaks of the Spirit as **"another helper of the same kind"**.

Just as Jesus drew alongside men & women to help them, so too does the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not just the Spirit of God, he is also the Spirit of Jesus.

The Latin Father Tertullian described the HS as *"the vicar of Christ"*.

To appreciate what Tertullian was saying, you have to be aware that the words 'vicar' & 'curate' have changed meanings: properly speaking, a curate is a person in charge of the cure/care of souls; whereas a vicar is his deputy - one who stands in for him. Hence we speak of "vicarious" sufferings - sufferings on the part of another.

The RCs speak of the Pope as the Vicar of Christ.

The Holy Sprit = Jesus' deputy!

The Holy Spirit = *'the presence of Jesus when Jesus is absent'* (Michael Green); 'he is 'the presence of Jesus in the life of the Christian, while Jesus is with the Father'

I.e. what Jesus was to the 12, the Holy Spirit is to the church today.

The Holy Spirit exercises the same ministry today as Jesus exercised - he offers the same help to us, as Jesus offered to his disciples of old.

There is no need to look back and wish that we had been there with Jesus - Jesus is here with us through his Spirit.

Hence Jesus can say: **"When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you"** (14.18). In the first place Jesus comes to us by his Spirit.

Jesus then goes on to imply that the coming present arrangement is better than the past:

"It is better for you (NRSV it is to your advantage) that I go away, because if I do not go, the Helper will not come to you" (16.7).

Advantage? Twofold!

- **The Holy Spirit is not limited by space or time.** The Holy Spirit universalises JX, in the sense that every Christian, wherever they may be, can enjoy his help; **"He will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever"** (14.16).
- **The Holy Spirit is even closer to us than Jesus was with his disciples today:** for while Jesus had been *"with"* his disciples, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will be *"in"* them. **"He remains with you, and is in you"** (Jn 14.17).

The Holy Spirit universalises the presence of Jesus in the hearts of his disciples. He is always with us - nobody can deprive us of him. As the very word 'Spirit' implies, he is closer to us than breathing (*pneuma*!)

Yes, God in giving us his Spirit, has given us the Spirit of Jesus.
What a wonderful gift!

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS ANOTHER PERSON

"You know *him*, because *he* remains with you and is in you" (17).

Is the Holy Spirit a person or a thing?

At first sight the **Spirit** may appear to be a 'thing' – the Greek word *pneuma* could mean 'breath' or 'wind' - both of these are impersonal forces.

Certainly for sects the Spirit is a *thing*: e.g..

Jehovah's Witnesses: any power which God might exercise (small s.)

Christadelphians: an active force radiating from God

Mormons: a substance like electricity.

Unfortunately some Christians seem to regard the Holy Spirit as a 'thing' – they refer to the Holy Spirit as 'it', and not as 'he'.

True, it is not easy to visualise the Spirit as a person: the very terms "**Father**" and "**Son**" conjure up personal beings, but not the term "Spirit".

Furthermore, many of the metaphors used in Bible for Holy Spirit (such as wind, water and fire) conjure up impersonal pictures.

But if the Holy Spirit is Christ's 'alter ego'/his vicar/his deputy/his presence in his absence, then he must be personal.

If we simply had the OT we might well be tempted to think of the Holy Spirit in abstract terms, but "*Jesus transposes the Spirit into a fully personal being. Jesus is the prism through whom the diffused & fitful light of the Spirit is concentrated*" (M.Green).

We see this clearly in John: for although in Greek the word for "**spirit**" (*pneuma*) is a neuter word, very often John breaks grammatical rules & uses a masculine pronoun: E.g. in 16.13 Jn uses a very emphatic (& grammatically unnecessary) masculine pronoun: "**But when *he*, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth**".

I.e. when Jesus said: "**When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power**", he was not promising some impersonal parcel of power - but rather he was promising a powerful Person, who would come alongside to help.

This immediately gives us a different perspective on the Spirit. Precisely because he is a powerful person, he is not at our disposal, but rather we are at his disposal.

The Holy Spirit is not a power to be manipulated or mastered.

Receiving the Holy Spirit is not about tapping into some source of power - it is about receiving a person into our lives.

In summary then: God gives to his children his Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus. The Spirit is not generally available: as John says, **“The world cannot receive him”**. But, we who have put our trust in Jesus, we may **“know him”** – we may experience his help, his strength, his advice, his guidance.

As I come to the end of my sermon, I believe God would have me ask you: “Do you know him?”

Up until this point my sermon has been addressed to those who have put their trust in Jesus and so been born again by God’s Spirit into a new way of living.

But I am conscious that there are some here who have yet to know this new Spirit-filled dimension of living – no doubt you do your best to live a good life, but you lack that necessary dynamic of the Spirit to live life aright..

If that is you, then let me remind you of where we began: our cry for forgiveness is answered in Jesus, our cry for goodness (i.e. the ability to live godly lives) is answered by his Spirit.

If you would know God’s Spirit, then you must first experience God’s forgiveness in Jesus. In the words of Peter on the Day of Pentecost: **“Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven, and you will receive God’s gift, the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2.36)

If you would know God’s gift of the Spirit in your life, if you would know the difference that Jesus through his Spirit can make to life, then let me encourage you this morning to speak to either myself or Matt – we would be delighted to help you.

What a difference God’s Spirit makes. JB Philips got it right when he wrote: *“Every time we say, ‘I believe in the Holy Spirit’, we mean that we believe that there is a living God able and willing to enter into human personality and change it”*.