

What We Need as We Need Him

John 14:15-31

¹⁵"If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **PARACLETE** to be with you forever-- ¹⁷the Spirit of truth. - John 14:15-17a

On the night before He died, Jesus prepared His disciples for the days ahead. In verse 15, Jesus joined their professions of love for Him to their obedience. Obeying Christ would prove dangerous for them, so this was a natural time for Jesus to talk about how He would empower them to obey Him. In Jesus' absence, His Father would send Someone else, the *Paraclete*, to help them along the way. John identifies this *Paraclete* as "the Spirit of truth" and in verse 26 as "the Holy Spirit."

Your Bible doesn't say *Paraclete*. I inserted it myself in place of "Counselor." *Paraclete* a transliteration of the Greek, *paracleton*. "Counselor" is simply too specific a word to do the job. John is the only Bible writer to use *paracleton* and he only uses it five times - four times in his gospel and once in 1 John 2:1. The *NIV* translates the word "Counselor" in the gospel and "one who speaks in our defense" in 1 John. The *KJV* renders the word, "Comforter" in the gospel and "Advocate" in the epistle. The *NASV* also translates it "Advocate" in 1 John, but renders it "Helper" in the Gospel. It is impossible to translate the word in all its possible nuances with any single English equivalent.

Paracleton means "one who is called alongside of another." In 1 John 2:1, the role of this *Paraclete* is clear. He intercedes for us before the Father when we are confessing our sins. So, to call Him an "Advocate" or "one who speaks to the Father in our defense" is dead on. However, in John's gospel, many roles for the Holy Spirit are referenced, and no single English word fills the bill.

Of *paracleton*, William Barclay writes: "... it is the reason *why* the person is called in which gives the word its distinctive associations." In other words, the Holy Spirit is a Counselor when counsel is needed, a Comforter when comfort is needed, a Helper when help is needed, an Advocate when advocacy is needed, an Encourager when encouragement is needed, a direction Revealer when direction is needed, an Empowerer when strength is needed and a Reminder when we need reminders of God's truths. The Holy Spirit is all that we need for walking in faith as we need Him.

I will use the word *Paraclete* in this message, but only because "one who is called alongside of another" or "the Come Alongsider" takes up too much space. Maintain that connection every time you hear the word, *Paraclete*. Do not think of *Paraclete* as a difficult or technical term. Think of it only as a code-word for "one who is called alongside of another."

In our text this morning, certain key words are quite inconspicuous in our English translations. One is "ask" in verse 16. In verse 14, Jesus said, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." That word was the term that described someone who is subordinate asking something of a superior. Jesus was asserting a rank for Himself that was above that of His friends. We can ask Jesus for anything, but He remains Lord and not our buddy. Now, in verse 16, Jesus makes a request of the Father, but He uses a word that implies that He is asking His Father as an equal. Jesus is on a level footing with His Father when He asks Him to send to us the *Paraclete* in His absence.

Another significant word is "another." "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **PARACLETE** to be with you forever." What does the word, another, convey to you. I might finish a sandwich; some greasy, artery-clogging stack of salami and cheese on white bread. If I ask for another, should I not expect that same cardiologist's nightmare I just ate (or his jack-pot, depending on how you look at it)? But, if I receive some sissy sandwich loaded with sprouts on whatever preppy bread is in vogue, it would technically be "another" sandwich, though I might hate to admit it.

Greek was a more precise language than English. It had two distinct words for "another," and the reader knew exactly what was meant. *Heteros* meant "another of a different kind." *Allos* meant "another of the same kind." Here Jesus uses *allos*. "I will ask the Father to send you 'another' *Paraclete*" of the very same essence as Me." This Someone that the Father would send to be with these disciples in Jesus' absence shared Jesus' nature, purpose and character and He was just as devoted to the disciple's keeping and wellbeing as Jesus was. Let us explore the ministry of this One Who is just like Jesus and Who has been called alongside us to be what we need of God as we need Him.

I. The Paraclete Is God's Presence with His People (17b-20)

... The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

A. The World Cannot Accept the Holy Spirit's Role in the Lives of His People

The world cannot fathom the Holy Spirit in His role as *Paraclete*. Ancient worldly notions of God were that He was capricious and hostile. Modern notions of God are that He is warm, fuzzy and accommodating. Today, He's just tickled that we acknowledge Him at all. But, the notion that He is a Holy Being Who uniquely made Himself known to Israel grated on the ancient world just as the notion that only Jesus makes God's salvation known to man causes the modern world to despise Christians.

The world "neither sees him nor knows him." This means that the people of this world never seek God with any sincere intent of surrendering to Him. So, while they may acknowledge the notion of God, they cannot experience His presence in the world because, in their sinful blindness, the light of His holiness holds no attraction for them. *Romans 1* teaches that God's divine qualities and power are evident in His creation, but the little bit about God that is knowable does not rouse enough interest in the ungodly for them to glorify their Creator by abandoning the wickedness that they prefer. Instead, they turn to idols made by man or in the image of man and they validate their sins. Whatever truth about God is available, they exchange for lies even as they profess to be wise.

B. As the *Paraclete*, the Holy Spirit Now Comes to Indwell His People

The Twelve understood Jesus when He said of the Holy Spirit, "he lives with you." This was not news. The Holy Spirit had been with Israel throughout her history. He came mightily upon kings and prophets in ages past. Of course, when the task at hand was completed, the Spirit would depart. The revolutionary thing that Jesus was saying now was that this same Spirit would "be in you." The Holy Spirit would indwell them. It would be Jesus' way of not leaving them as comfortless orphans. He would defeat death, and by virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they would share His life.

Soon, the world would not see Jesus anymore. In fact, the world at large would be the culprit that put Jesus out of sight. Through the voices of its Jewish ranks, the world would demand, "Crucify Him!" and send Him to His grave. The "day" of great realization referenced in verse 20 would be that first Day of Pentecost following Jesus' Resurrection when the Holy Spirit descended in power upon these same disciples. They would instantly realize that Jesus was indeed one with His Father, and that they themselves were now joined to Him. What else could explain Peter's boldness that day? Less than two months separated his three-fold denial of Jesus from an empowered sermon that prompted three thousand people to embrace Jesus. Someone must have come along side him.

II. The Paraclete Is God's Confirmer of His Covenant (21-24)

A. The Disciples Had a Hard Time Keeping Up verses 21, 22

...²¹Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (this is the work of the Spirit).

²²Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

Earlier in the evening, Peter was confused when Jesus washed his feet. Thomas and Philip asked questions that betrayed their lack of understanding. Now, when Jesus spoke of "showing" Himself to obedient, loving disciples, Judas, not Iscariot and elsewhere called Thaddeus, perks up.

The literal meaning of Judas' words is amusing: "'What has come to pass' that You're now going to show Yourself to us, but not to the world?" Thaddeus thought Jesus had changed the plan. We know the disciples were rather locked into their preconceived notions about *Messiah's* kingdom, but poor ol' Thaddeus took it to a new level. "Jesus, what happened to the 'rock'em, sock'em' Messianic takeover we've all been looking forward to?" That was never a part of Jesus' agenda.

We all know people like Thaddeus. It may be a child, a friend, a spouse or a coworker. They throw out an idea and unless you specifically object then and there, they treat silence as affirmation. Later, they say, "I thought we agreed to paint it blue" or "I thought we were going out to eat tonight." Suddenly, you're cornered into candor; "That was your idea, but I never actually agreed to it." It had not dawned on Thaddeus that his notions were wrong. Now, Jesus had to spell it out for him.

B. Jesus Reiterated for Judas' Sake verses 23-24

²³Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

"Once more, from the top, Judas: Trusting my words and obeying my commands are the key to a fuller experience of my Person and of my Father's Person. That is the disclosure of Myself that I am talking about and it is not a change of plans. 'These words belong to the Father who sent me.' They were the plan all along. And, it is the ministry of the *Paraclete* to make Us known to you."

Jesus' gaze stretched beyond the confines of the Upper Room and into the ages when He began to speak in terms of "whoever" and "anyone." For anyone today who claims to love Jesus, obedience proves the claim. If we love Jesus, we will obey Jesus. And, once the link between a man's professed love of Christ and his obedience to Him is established, Jesus and the Father "will come to him and make our home with him." Jesus confirms what our experience as Christians already teaches us. When we are obedient, we have a sense of the divine presence that we lack when we are disobedient. Only those who love Jesus and guard His words will continue to see Him when He has returned to His Father. This will be the work of the *Paraclete*, the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Sometimes, I hear rhetoric that suggests that what one needs is "more of God's Spirit." The doctrine of the Godhead tells us that God is three distinct Persons, but One in His essence. Throughout our text, the Holy Spirit is described as a distinct Person just as Jesus and the Father are distinct Persons. The Holy Spirit is not a heavenly commodity with which we are filled to varying degrees. He is the fullness of God abiding in us by virtue of Christ's promise. "More or less" of the Spirit is an odd way to talk about Someone Who is a unique Person rather than a two-liter bottle of soft-drink.

If you don't sense the presence of Christ, I doubt that it is because you need a bigger dose of the Holy Spirit. The rhetoric of "needing more of the Spirit" is probably worded better in terms of "needing less of you" so that your greater obedience to Christ, which is greater love for Christ, will cause Jesus to show more of Himself to you through the Holy Spirit in You. My friend, when we need a greater sense of Jesus' presence, the first place we should look is at our obedience. Do we love our brothers? Are we serving others? Are we living sacrificially? Are we pursuing purity in thought and deed?

III. The Paraclete Is God's Revealer of His Riches (25-31)

A. The Holy Spirit Leads Us to the Riches of God's Truth verses 25, 26

²⁵"All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the **PARACLETE**, 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 returned to the looming needs of these disciples. He had laid the foundation for all truth in His three years with them, but how could they remember those foundational teachings as the decades rolled by? And, how could they accurately apply them to the church? The *Paraclete* in His capacity as Reminder would remind them of all the things Jesus taught them. In His capacity as Teacher, the *Paraclete* would "teach" them, bringing them to a point of understanding these things thoroughly enough to turn the world upside down. The Spirit would help them "put it all together," inspiring them as they recorded what they had seen and heard. That is why we call their testimony, our Bible, God-breathed.

The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit to us works in harmony with the Bible. He does not reveal new truths to modern-day prophet wannabes. A preacher was asked why he used so much scripture in his sermons. "It's the only part of the message of which I'm sure." That's why I structure almost every sermon around a Bible text rather than a topic, a proposition, an ax to grind, or people's "felt-needs." I just cannot be that sure of my conclusions on such matters, but I can trust the Bible.

B. The Holy Spirit is the Bearer of the Peace of Christ verse 27-31

... ²⁷Peace 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.

It is one thing to promise peace. It is another to claim to provide a peace that supersedes all that we think we understand peace to be. The best peace that we can acquire in this world falls short of what Christ offers. We might think of peace as the absence of suffering or heartache. One extreme political notion of peace is the naïve expectation that nations will mutually agree to be nice. The other extreme thinks of peace as a state where one nation is so strong that others dare not misbehave. We may think of nature, such as a serene mountain lake that is perfectly still.

However you think of peace, it pales in comparison to what Jesus offers us by His Spirit. This peace has nothing to do with a balance of power. It is itself, power. People can despise us. Circumstances can upset us. Storms can rage. Nation can war against nation. But, if the Holy Spirit can effectively empower us to understand that we are in the center of God's will, then, "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds" (Philippians 4:7).

Verses 28-31 illustrate the power of this peace:

²⁸"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I ... (This means that the Father Who is Spirit is more vast and expansive than Jesus can possibly be in the flesh. It does *not* mean the Son is an inferior Being) ... ²⁹I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. ³⁰I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, ³¹but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

"Come now; let us leave.

We cannot imagine the fleshly horrors that lay before Jesus. Consider the power of divine peace as Jesus tells His disciples, "Let it begin. I've told you what to expect. The devil is coming, but he's powerless over me. The Father's plan must play out. The salvation of the world depends on it. 'Come now; let us leave.'" And, with these words, Jesus began His final trek to Golgotha.

But, the Father would send the Holy Spirit to come alongside His disciples even as Jesus has been exalted to His throne in heaven. He is Comforter, Counselor, Advocate, Encourager, Strengthener, Reminder, Giver of Peace as well as a host of other things. He has been called to our sides to be all of God that we need Him to be. But, Jesus makes it very clear that the *Paraclete* is a gift only to those who have embraced Jesus as the Way to God. He comes only to those who love Jesus and who express that love by obediently following Him as true disciples.

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