

# JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

John 14v16; 14v26; 15v26; 16v7

In the Introduction of his monumental work on Paul's Theology of the Spirit, Gordon Fee recalls a student speaking to one of his Seminary colleagues: *"God the Father makes perfectly good sense to me; and God the Son I can quite understand; but the Holy Spirit is a grey, oblong blur."* ('God's Empowering Presence.' 1994)

If that's how you sometimes feel then I hope that by the end of this morning the Spirit will be less of a "grey oblong blur", and closer to the clear vision of a 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian Carmelite who prayed; *"Holy Spirit, Spirit of truth, you are the reward of the saints, the comforter of souls, light in the darkness, riches to the poor, treasure to lovers, food for the hungry, comfort to those who are wandering; to sum up, you are the one in whom all treasures are contained."* (Mary Magdelene Dei Pazzi. 1566-1607) For this to happen it will take more than my words; it will require your heart to be open and receptive, and the Word and the Spirit acting upon you,

More than any of the other Gospels, John's is the one which highlights the Spirit in relation to Jesus. At His baptism Jesus is the One endowed with the Spirit: This is the sign by which John the Baptist recognises Jesus as the Messiah. (ch.1v32-34) Jesus is also the One who promises the Spirit to those who thirst. (7v38, 39)

Now, on the eve of His death on the cross, Jesus promises that He will dwell in His disciples by the Holy Spirit when He returns to heaven. In **ch. 14v16ff** **"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Parakletos to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. 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. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."** The Spirit would continue what Jesus had been doing in the earth, only this time living in, as well as with, disciples.

There are four key passages on the Spirit in Jesus' final discourse: ch. 14v15-18; 14v25-26; 15v26; 16v5-15. Each one contains this important description of the Spirit as the **"Parakletos."** (14v16; 14v26; 15v26; 16v7) This morning we will be asking what this means.

On three of the four occasions Jesus links this with the phrase **"the Spirit of truth"**. (14v16,17; 15v26; 16v7,13.) When Jesus was with the disciples He said "I am the truth" (14v6); He taught them truth and instructed them. Now the Spirit carries on this work of Jesus. He is "the Spirit of truth".

This role of the Spirit was crucial in the formation of the New Testament. He ensured that the apostolic record of Jesus life & teaching was a true one. Jesus said **(14v26) the Parakletos, the Holy Spirit will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.** i.e. accurate

memory of the words and events and the significance of those words and events. But that was not all.

**16v12-14: I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.**

The Scriptures are complete but this role of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth is still important today. He exposes the guilt of the sinful world with the light of God's truth (16v8-11) He highlights the beauty and glory of Jesus. He reveals truth from the Bible. He illuminates our dull minds. He gives us grace gifts e.g. words of wisdom and words of knowledge.

But what does the word **PARAKLETOS** mean? It has been translated in so many ways that it can be confusing; yet these different translations can actually help convey something of the range of the Spirit's activity in your life. Perhaps no *one* English word can adequately convey the meaning.

The oldest English Bibles have the **Comforter**. This was how the great John Wycliffe first translated *parakletos* in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as did the translators of the King James Version. Yes, the Spirit does comfort. But what influenced these translators was the Latin "*confortare*" meaning to make strong or to fortify. You can see how our modern word "comforter" doesn't do the job any more. We think of comforting as putting an arm around the shoulder of someone who is sorrowing. Jesus has much more than this in mind.

## **1. COUNSELLOR:** (NIV)

This translation draws on an almost identical word from the same "family" which means "to call alongside". Jesus had been alongside the disciples as their counsellor, now the Spirit is to be their counsellor.

This is one of the functions of the Holy Spirit. He is someone who is with you through difficulties. He is someone who listens, who feels with you; someone who encourages you or exhorts you. But, most important of all *a Person* not a textbook, or a How-to-cope DVD! Nor should we think of the Spirit like a professional counsellor or psychologist – a stranger, in an office, with a strict appointment time, with no personal involvement and, of course, a fee to pay.

Some years ago I went through an experience of "burnout". Not many people knew what I was going through, but one person who helped me was a friend called Tony. He and I would drive out to the Wildfowl Reserve at Arundel. We would simply walk there together. I would tell him how I felt and how I was doing. He would listen and ask a question here and there. He was wise, he could make me laugh, he understood and I could trust him. But most of all He was there for me. In fact Tony and I got to know each other & became better friends through the process. This gives a better idea of the way the Spirit is a counsellor to us.

In that case the Holy Spirit, The Counsellor, was alongside me in and through this good friend. You and I still need people like Tony. But don't miss the fact that God has given each of us the Spirit personally. We are never alone. He is with us at all such times; even when there is no Tony at hand.

## **2. ADVOCATE:** (New English Bible)

This is the straightforward meaning of the word in secular Greek. A *parakletos* was a legal representative. Only in one other place in the New Testament do we find this word, and again it is from the pen of the apostle John (1 John 2v1) "*My dear children, I write this so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*" Here the word *parakletos* is used, not of the Spirit, but of Jesus Himself. He is our Advocate in heaven speaking up for us. But there is no contradiction. **14v16 "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Parakletos to be with you forever**

Although "Advocate" may not feel as personal, it gets across the strict meaning and conveys a wide range of ways the Spirit acts for us. He comes alongside us in a time of need. He gives us advice. He is the expert who knows so much more than we do. He stands with us against any accuser, exposing their lies. (16v8) He speaks for us.

But especially, as Advocate, He helps us bear witness to Jesus. We talk about "testifying" or "giving testimony"; this is the language of the courtroom. The Spirit helps us as an advocate would. But we must never think of the Spirit hanging on our coat tails as we bear witness to Jesus. He is much more passionate about bearing witness to Jesus than we are. **When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. (15v26)** The Holy Spirit has been called "God the Evangelist". It is His function to highlight the truth of who Jesus is. In fact He is so passionate about bearing witness to Jesus that sometimes He doesn't wait for us to arrive!

"The first missionaries to preach in the Muslim north of Nigeria were greeted by a handful of people who were already believers in Jesus and claimed to follow him. They were the disciples of one Malam Ibrahim, a teacher of the Koran whose studies had slowly convinced him that the Jesus of whom he read in its pages was the mediator through whom the prayers of the faithful are offered up to the All-Merciful. So he gathered around him a group who began to pray regularly in the name of Isa Masih, Jesus the Messiah. When the Islamic authorities discovered, he was charged with heresy, refused to recant, and was crucified in Kano market place, thirty years before a Christian preacher arrived in the country" (Michael Green: 'I Believe in the Holy Spirit')

### **3. HELPER:** (J.B.Phillips / Good News Bible)

This also draws on the idea of “one called alongside to help”. For example: He helps us when we don’t know what to say in prayer. When Jesus was with the disciples He helped them in this way. He helped them know how to pray. Now we have the Holy Spirit within to help us – carrying on Jesus work.

Romans 8v26,27: “The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express”. The word “help” pictures one person assisting another to carry a load that is too much for one. That is exactly how prayer can feel and is one reason why praying with others is usually easier than praying alone.

Actually, we never pray alone. The Spirit “helps” us. But He does not take our place. We are not passive. He does this as an expert Advocate. “Intercedes” here means “makes appeal for us ... with groans that words cannot express” i.e. the Spirit takes the stumbling words of a new believer. He edits our ramblings. He interprets our tongue speaking. He takes our yearnings and brings them to the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. (e.g. “O God!”)

### **4. FRIEND:** (‘The Message’)

This is not so strict in translation terms, but it gathers in so much of what is meant by Jesus. He was the Friend on earth to His disciples. Now He was leaving them, but He would send another Friend, the Spirit - this time to live in them. Claudio Friedzon is an Argentinian pastor who has seen extraordinary growth and miracles in his ministry. He would say that the turning point in his life and ministry was when he discovered the Holy Spirit as a Person - as a Friend he could know. When he wrote his story he called the book, ‘Holy Spirit I am hungry for you.’ This is what he says:

*“Some years ago God challenged me to start living a new phase in my relationship with Him. My eyes were opened as never before to the reality of the Holy Spirit. The ‘key’ that I felt I was lacking was finally in my hands, and with it I was able to gain access to heaven’s treasures! My personal relationship with the Holy Spirit began to occupy the first place in my life. This fellowship with God changed my life and my ministry. I was radically transformed. My experience was so strong that for whole nights I did not sleep in order to be with him. Even today, his presence seduces me so much that I keep watch on my eyes and my heart so that nothing will deprive me of it. When the Holy Spirit fills us everything becomes fresh and we feel renewed.”*

Some may find this language makes them uncomfortable. It is so very intimate. But Friedzon has made a wonderful discovery. The Holy Spirit is not “grey, oblong blur”. The Holy Spirit is Jesus Himself, God Himself, living in you: a Counsellor; an Advocate; a Helper; a Friend.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

Read John 14v15-18; 14v25-26; 15v26; 16v5-15.

Someone do a brief summary of the message; no more than 5 minutes!

1. What did you find that encouraged or provoked you in Sunday's message on the Holy Spirit?
2. Was there anything that you found difficult to grasp or believe?
3. Share any personal experience of the Spirit in your life:
  - As Counsellor: in a time of difficulty
  - As Advocate: in bearing witness to Jesus
  - As Helper: in praying (or some other way)
4. How can we go about developing a relationship with the Spirit as a Friend?