

STUDY ON THE TEACHING OF JESUS

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Read John 15:26-27, 16:1-7

At our last lesson, Jesus called His disciples friends and not just casual friends but friends that are family members. He brings His friends into a new level when He said: *“for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you”* (v15b). This is a level of friendship we are not familiar with today in the natural but that is what friendship means within the kingdom of God setting.

The Paraclete (Holy Spirit)

In Jesus' clearest teaching on the coming Holy Spirit, he refers four times specifically, to the Paraclete -- 14:15-17; 25-26; 15:26; 16:5-15 -- and several other times to the Holy Spirit in related contexts. *Paraklētōs* is variously translated as the "Comforter" (KJV), "Counsellor" (NIV, RSV), "Advocate" (NRSV), "Helper" (ESV). It can't be easily translated into English with a word that adequately covers its breadth of meaning. In essence, it might denote "Strengthener," "Helper" (ESV). In Greek, the word can have the idea of one who provides help as a legal advocate, but more an advocate for the defence. Another approach might be "Friend," as in a Friend at court.

In the New Testament, the word is found only in John's literature and is used twice of Christ, who pleads His people's cause before the Father (1 John 2:1), and, by implication, of the Holy Spirit as *"another paraklētōs"* (besides Jesus).

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17)

Jesus says that the Father will send "another Counsellor (paraklētōs)." This implies that the disciples already have a Paraclete to help them, and that the Holy Spirit is another Paraclete in addition. Jesus is saying that at present He is their Paraclete -- the one the Father has sent to help them. Jesus tells his disciples that they, unlike the world, are already familiar with this Paraclete:

"... for He dwells with you and will be in you." (14:17b)

Jesus seems to be saying that in his own Person, they have experienced the Paraclete living or abiding or dwelling "with them" or at their side. But, when the Father sends the Holy Spirit, this Paraclete will be (future tense) within them.

Jesus has been their Paraclete, Helper, Friend thus far, but the Holy Spirit will replace Jesus as an interior presence, always with them, to guide and instruct them.

The role of the Paraclete in relation to the disciples' mirrors Jesus' role with them when he was on earth.

New Paraclete

Spirit of truth (14:17; 16:13)

Holy Spirit (14:16)

Known by disciples (14:17)

Guide into way of truth (16:13)

Teaches (14:26)

Declares what is to come (16:14)

Jesus

The Truth (14:6)

Holy One of God (6:69)

John 14:7, 9

The Way, the Truth (14:6)

John 6:59; 7:14, 18; 8:20

John 4:25-26

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| Bears witness (15:26-27) | John 8:14 |
| Glorifies Jesus (16:14) | Glorifies the Father (8:28; 12:27-28; 14:13; 17:4) |
| World cannot accept (14:17) | Evil men do not accept (5:43; 12:48) |
| World does not see (14:17) | Men soon lose sight of (16:16) |
| World does not know or recognize (14:17) | Men do not know Jesus (16:3; 7:28; 8:14, 19; 14:7) |
| Bears witness to the world's hate (15:26; 15:18-25) | Bears witness against the world (7:7) |

More about the Paraclete (15:26-27)

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness because you have been with Me from the beginning.” (vv26-27)

Now we come to one of the Paraclete passages that instructs us about the Holy Spirit. This passage teaches us several things about the Holy Spirit.

1. Jesus will send Him from the Father and He proceeds from the Father.
2. He is called the "Spirit of truth" (also 14:17 and 16:13).
3. He is spoken of as a Person (14:26; 15:16, 26).
4. He will testify or witness concerning Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is a Person (14:26; 15:16, 26)

While the "Spirit" is often referred to by a neuter Greek pronoun, since the pneuma has a neuter gender in Greek (such as in 14:17, 26; 15:26), on several occasions Jesus uses the masculine pronoun, apparently to emphasize the Spirit's Personhood. Observe these verses.

*“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, **He** (masculine pronoun) will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (John 14:26)*

*“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, **He** (masculine pronoun) will testify of Me.” (John 15:26)*

*“However, when **He** (masculine pronoun), the Spirit of truth, has come, **He** (masculine pronoun) will guide you into all truth; for **He** (masculine pronoun) will not speak on **His** own authority, but whatever **He** (masculine pronoun) hears He will speak; and **He** (masculine pronoun) will tell you things to come.” (John 16:13)*

It is important that we emphasise the Holy Spirit's divinity and personal nature because some groups specifically deny that the Holy Spirit is a divine being. The Jehovah's Witness New World Translation, for example, sometimes even omits the word "Spirit" and substitutes the phrase "God's active force" in its place (hardly a faithful translation!), a phrase that strips away any sense of personhood.

The Spirit Testifies Concerning Jesus

The Spirit's function of testifying about Jesus is closely related to reminding the disciples what Jesus taught. The Spirit presents Christ's case for Him before the believers and the world. There is the affirming ministry of the Holy Spirit – affirming Jesus' teaching to us and affirming us in Christ all the time. Elsewhere, Jesus told his disciples not to worry about what to say when they are brought into court.

"...do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." (Luke 12:11b-12)

The Paraclete will serve as your legal advisor as needed when you are persecuted.

Don't Go Astray When They Persecute You (16:1-4)

"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. "And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you."" (vv1-4)

Jesus' intent is to keep his disciples from falling away in time of persecution (16:1). "Go astray" (NIV), "keep you from stumbling" (NRSV), "keep you from falling away" (ESV), "be offended" (KJV) is the verb skandalizō, "to cause to be brought to a downfall, cause to sin."

skandalizō was not a stumbling-block which might trip you up... It is used of the spring of a trap which might 'go off' when you were least expecting it. Jesus warned that the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service: and that time quickly came, as the life of Saul of Tarsus before his conversion showed (Acts 8:1-3, 22:3-5, 26:9-11). Since then, there have been many who persecute and kill the true followers of Jesus because they think God is pleased. Today, we have those who kill the true followers literally and those who kill them verbally and by other form of persecution in the name of God.

Jesus hadn't spent a lot of time preparing them for persecution previously, because at that point He personally bore the brunt of the persecution. But with Him gone, they will face the persecution head on, relying on the Paraclete to help them.

Jesus explains the benefits of His departure (16:5-7)

"But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 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 depart, I will send Him to you." (vv5-7)

Peter had asked this question earlier (John 13:36) and Thomas asked a similar question (John 14:5). Therefore, Jesus must mean not only the words of the question, but the heart of it. Their previous asking was in the sense, what will happen to us when You leave, not in the sense Jesus meant here – what will happen to You when You leave. Jesus excused their lack of interest in His fate, knowing their great sorrow. They had sorrow now, but their future was brighter. The disciples could only see the sorrow of Jesus leaving; but Jesus' departure was an essential step in their growth as disciples.

It is to your advantage that I go away:

This had to be difficult for the disciples to believe. When a loved one is near death, we often think it is the best to let death take its course. We say, "It will be better for them to go, and to stop the suffering. It is to their advantage to go away." But when someone we love is near death, we usually don't think that it is to our advantage that they go. Yet Jesus here said that it wasn't for His advantage, but to your advantage that I go away.

If the disciples really understood what was about to happen, it would be even more difficult for them to believe.

- It is to your advantage that Jesus is arrested
- It is to your advantage that Jesus' ministry of teaching and miracles is stopped
- It is to your advantage that Jesus is beaten
- It is to your advantage that Jesus is mocked
- It is to your advantage that Jesus is sentenced for execution
- It is to your advantage that Jesus is nailed to a cross
- It is to your advantage that Jesus dies in the company of notorious criminals
- It is to your advantage that His lifeless body is laid in a cold grave

However, Jesus had a plan, but they couldn't understand it. With 2,000 years of hindsight, we see that when Jesus went away, He then sent the Spirit of God, which had and has a broader and more effective ministry in the entire world.

How would true followers of Jesus then and now have coped without the Holy Spirit?