

I attended a funeral last Wednesday; it was the funeral of our dear sister Billie Couch, who had lived a long and fruitful life. Saying goodbye is always hard, but in spite of that there was a real sense of celebration as people shared their love for Billie and rejoiced that she is now with her Lord.

Billie lived a rich and fulfilling life, and was an inspiration and a blessing to her family and hundreds if not thousands of others. One of the touching and amusing stories was told by her son Jim. As a 10-year old he decided to experiment with the effects of gravity on a softened stick of butter, and threw it in the air at the foot of the stairs so as to give it plenty of height. He failed to catch it, the stick landed on the carpet, and mother Billie went ballistic and sent him to bed without dinner. As a parenthetical note, Jim is now a missionary in Afghanistan; this may give some encouragement to those of you with adventurous kids. Jim went on to say that later that evening Billie came to his room and told him that the Holy Spirit had convicted her that she had been too harsh with him; would he forgive her? And after she had left he lay in bed thinking "I've got the best mother in the world." Billie lived a full and rewarding and fulfilling life!

Billie's life was fulfilling because she loved the Lord and was always talking about him and sharing him; she left instructions that her grandson preach the gospel at her funeral. But what do other people want out of life? What do you want out of your life? I decided to conduct a highly scientific investigation by consulting not one but two comments on the web (how much better can you get than that!). So here are two of the answers to the question "What do you want out of your life?" that I found:

To be respected and to be understood  
 To be noticed and to be invited to participate  
 To be loved and to be longed for  
 To be needed and to be wanted  
 To feel loved . . . . . and . . . . .  
 To feel like 'someone important' . . .  
 To the people they love and care about the most

To not be alone. One time (I have depression) I was asked to describe my funeral, and I started to cry uncontrollably because I said there would be no one there.

Notice how these individuals placed relationships above things like money and fame; to be loved, to be needed, to not be alone; these are what people are searching for. Of course there are those who think that money will buy happiness, like the person who said "All I ask is a chance to *prove* that money can't make me happy." But deep down most people know that it is our relationships that really count. And of course our Lord knew that too, and that is why He not only provided a way for us to have a new relationship with God His Father through His death on the cross, but He also provided us with the promise of His presence forever through the Holy Spirit. Let us read what our Lord taught His disciples in John 14:15-31

### **John 14:15-31**

*"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor 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. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever 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."*

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

*Jesus 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. He 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.*

*"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, 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. Peace 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.*

*"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. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but 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."*

In this passage Our Lord gives us the first part of a two-part teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit; the second part comes at the end of chapter 15 and in chapter 16. We can note that this teaching is not the first mention of the Holy Spirit in the gospel of John; in John 3, where Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, he tells Nicodemus that the new birth is through the Holy Spirit:

### **John 3:5-7**

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

And he gives the same message in **John 6:63**

"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."

But in John 14 Jesus begins to tell His disciples about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and that is where we pick up today. I want to try to answer two simple questions about the Holy Spirit, focusing on Jesus teaching in John 14, and then ask ourselves "so what?"

So my outline is very simple:

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?
2. What is His ministry?
3. So what?

### **1. Who is the Holy Spirit?**

Scripture teaches us two important facts about him:

#### **a. He is a person.**

We need to emphasize this because the words "Holy Spirit" do not denote personhood as clearly as the words "God the Father" and "God the Son" do for the other persons of the Trinity. We have no trouble understanding that our Lord is a person, because we have the records of his life on earth, and we read of him teaching and interacting with people and eating and getting tired and all the other things that people do. So that is easy for us to understand. And then Jesus talks about God as his Father, and we can understand that relationship because we know all about fathers. But the God the Holy Spirit? Or even, as in the KJV, God the Holy Ghost? How can a *spirit* be a *person*? So we need to get beyond the name used to see the reality behind. Let me suggest several reasons from Scripture that show that the Holy Spirit is a person:

1. *He is a Counselor.* Jesus promises in John 14:16 “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor”. A counselor is a person who provides wisdom and advice, whether it is a marriage counselor to help couples repair a strained marriage, or a financial counselor to help people manage their money or any other kind of counselor. But a counselor is always a person; someone you go to for help.

2. *He is **another** Counselor.* In the passage we just looked at, Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as another Counselor. What does that mean? Who is the first counselor? Clearly the first Counselor Jesus is speaking about is himself; in the book of Isaiah he is described thus:

Isa 9:6

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

So the Holy Spirit is another Counselor, with the implication that he is like Jesus. The Greek word used for another is *allon*, which can have the meaning “another of the same kind”. A word used in chemistry is derived from *allon*; it is the word *allotrope*, which refers to different physical forms of an element. Diamond and graphite, for example, are both allotropes of carbon; the essential chemical nature of the element is the same in each case, but the physical form is very different. So when Jesus used the words “another Counselor” of the Holy Spirit, he was making it clear that the Holy Spirit, like himself, is a person.

3. *He has the characteristics of a person.*

He teaches: Luke 12:12 “for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

He can be resisted: Acts 7:51 “You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit”

He speaks to people: Acts 8:28-29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

He encourages: Acts 9:31 Then the church ... enjoyed a time of peace...and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

He can be grieved: Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" commands Paul. Now, only a dear friend can be grieved. Not a stranger: he might be annoyed. Not a chance acquaintance: he might be perplexed. Not a business partner: he might be offended. Only a loved one can be grieved.”

Milton S. Agnew

## **b. He is God**

This is clear from the fact that He is called “the Spirit of God”, linking God the Father and God the Holy Spirit inextricably together. Thus Paul speaks about the Spirit who is from God:

1 Cor 2:10-12

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

And in Romans 8

Rom 8:11

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

And then He is spoken of as equal with the Father and the Son

2 Cor 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

## **2. What is His ministry?**

We can only scratch the surface here, but we can immediately notice three things from Christ's words

### *a. He is a Counselor.*

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor. We already looked at this verse in considering the fact that the Holy Spirit is a person, so now let us consider what it means for us to have the Holy Spirit. The word translated Counselor is a translation of the Greek word *parakleton*, which literally means "one called alongside (to help)". Some translations use the word Advocate here. So a part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to strengthen and encourage believers, which means He is ready to strengthen and encourage you. He calls thoughts of guidance and encouragement to our hearts and minds, often in the form of Scripture. It may be that this is how the Holy Spirit convicted Billie Couch of harshness towards her son Jim.

### *b. He is the Spirit of Truth*

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth; He is the one who inspired the Scriptures, He is the one who will enable us to discern truth from error in spiritual matters. There are many who seek to twist the Scriptures, either watering them down or even denying that parts of them are true.

Sadly there are pastors and teachers in some churches who do not believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, for example.

Others twist Scripture to make it mean that God is obligated to answer our prayers, selectively focusing on a promise such as Matt 18:19-20 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." And ignoring warnings such as James 4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

We need the Spirit of truth to guide us into truth and to guard us against error from twisting Scripture or from any other source.

But let me also say here that God reveals His truth through Nature as well; I would not be a scientist if I did not know that I am "thinking God's thoughts after Him" (to use Kepler's phrase) as I study chemistry. And the very fact that we can understand nature is actually strong evidence that God exists. My colleague Paul Carlier quoted the Oxford Philosopher Richard Swinburne in a talk he gave to Cru a couple of weeks ago: "The very success of science in showing how deeply ordered the natural world is provides strong grounds for believing that there is an even deeper cause for that order." And ultimately there can be no conflict between science, correctly interpreted, and God's word, also correctly interpreted. All truth is God's truth; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth.

### *c. He dwells in all believers*

John 14:17-18 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.

Jesus teaches the disciples here that the Holy Spirit lives "with you" and will be "in you". The latter part of this promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came in full measure on the disciples, and we live in the post-Pentecostal age, so now the Holy Spirit is in all believers. And so we can take comfort and encouragement in the fact that He dwells in us.

### *d. He brings peace to believers.*

John 14:26-27

But the Counselor, 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. Peace 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.

### **3. So what?**

Here are some take-home lessons that we can learn from this passage

#### *1. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to all the disciples.*

John 14:23 "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." How does this happen? It is through the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere

Rom 8:9

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

"The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity.

It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for his people." (A. W. Tozer)

#### 2. The Holy Spirit is given to those who love and obey Jesus

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

"Follow the conduct of the Spirit, and you shall have the comfort of the Spirit." (Matthew Henry)

#### 3. The Holy Spirit is a source of peace and comfort to all believers

John 14:27

"Peace 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."