

“Another Helper, the Spirit of Truth”
John 15:15-27 | Pastor Jason Van Bommel

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” ²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. – John 14:15-27, ESV

Our Source of Ongoing Comfort

If you're going to drive somewhere successfully, you need at least four things:

1. You need a car.
2. You need to know how to drive.
3. You need to know where you're going and how to get there.
4. You need enough fuel to get you there.

Last week, we heard Jesus tell His disciples on His final night with them before His crucifixion, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.” His disciples were troubled and their hearts were being overwhelmed by sorrow and distress. Throughout this teaching on this final night, Jesus is leading His disciples toward this destination: A place where their hearts will not be troubled and upset, but where they will instead trust in God the Father and trust in Him as their Savior and Lord.

This is the place we all need to be: untroubled trust, real trusting rest in the midst of turmoil – not complacency or apathy or ignorance and not distress or anxiety or fear, but real faith and real peace.

To get there, Jesus tells His disciples what they need:

1. An eternal perspective – *“In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”*
2. Jesus Himself as their wonderful Savior – *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me.”*
3. Inexhaustible resources to do the works of Jesus and to ask for anything in prayer – *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”*

But here’s the thing: It’s one thing to know you need these things, and it’s another thing to actually have them. I can ask you to meet me at my house and give you directions from here to there and that information will not actually get you to my house, will it? If you don’t have a car or you don’t know how to drive your car or if your car has no gas, you won’t be going anywhere, no matter how much you know. Knowing how is not the same as being able to, and knowing what you need is not the same thing as having what you need.

If our hearts are going to be comforted, strengthened, helped, so we can be not troubled but have faith instead, we need more than just information. We don’t just need to know that we need an eternal perspective, we need an eternal perspective to shape our thinking and feeling and living. We don’t just need to know that we need Jesus as a wonderful Savior, we need Jesus as our wonderful Savior wonderfully saving us. We don’t just need to know that we have inexhaustible resources available to us, we need those inexhaustible resources and we need to be able to tap into them.

We need a real car to drive, and we need to know how to drive it, and we need gas in our tank. Thankfully, Jesus knows our real need even better than we do, and so He gives us more than just words. He gives us a real, eternal, inexhaustible, personal source of strength, comfort, power and peace, One who unites us to Christ in a real and powerful way, bringing us to Jesus and bringing Jesus to us in a deeply personal and transformative way. How? By giving us the Holy Spirit!

A. Condition: Who receives the Spirit?

Jesus begins this section of His teaching by explaining who will receive the Holy Spirit, those who love Him: *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”*

We can understand the condition Jesus gives in this passage two different ways:

1. If we love Jesus, then we are required keep His commands. In response to our keeping His commands, Jesus will ask the Father and give us the Holy Spirit as another Helper.
OR
2. If we truly love Jesus, we will strive to keep His commands. As such, we will show that we are true followers of Jesus, and it is the true followers of Jesus who receive the Holy Spirit.

In other words, the first understanding carries with it an imperative, or command, force and the Spirit is given in response to our obedience. The second understanding is more indicative, indicating what Jesus does for His own. His own are those who love Him, those who obey Him out of love. His own are the ones who receive the Spirit, not because we deserve or have earned the Spirit, but because we belong to Jesus.

In deciding between these two different understandings, we have to ask which one fits better with the overall message of John's Gospel. So far in John's Gospel, Jesus has told us that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws Him. He has said that everyone whom the Father gives to Him will come to Him, and those who come to Him He will not cast out. He has said that His sheep know His voice and follow Him. He has said those who do not know His voice and do not follow Him fail to do so because they are not His sheep. And later, in John 15:16, Jesus will say to these disciples, "*You did not choose me, but I chose you, that you should go and bear fruit.*"

So, given the broader context of the whole Gospel of John, I think it's clear that Jesus intends the second meaning not the first. These words are indicative and not imperative; they tell us what Jesus does for His own, not what we must do to earn the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, if we understand well what the Bible teaches us about the Holy Spirit's role in the life of believers, we can affirm that no one comes to love Jesus and to seek to obey Him apart from the Spirit's work. The Spirit is the One whom the Father uses to draw us to the Son. So, the Spirit draws us to the Son, we come to love and obey the Son, and the Son gives us the gift of the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit as we come to true faith in Jesus.

But why does Jesus give us the Spirit? What is the Spirit's purpose in our lives?

B. Purpose: *Why is the Holy Spirit given?*

Jesus here calls the Holy Spirit "another Helper" and "the Spirit of truth." "Another" here means "another of the same kind" and not "a completely different other." Just as Jesus was the disciples' Helper while He was with them in the flesh on earth, so the Spirit will be their Helper after He goes away.

The word “Helper” here is *paraclete*, literally “One called alongside.” In legal contexts, it carries the idea of an advocate, but in broader contexts, it carries the idea of a counselor/advisor or a coach or an encourager. It’s a very difficult word to translate accurately into English, and different translations render the word “Helper” or “Advocate” or “Comforter” or “Counselor.” Each of these English words carries an aspect of the meaning in Greek, but none of them adequately captures the whole. One aspect of the meaning missed by most of these English words is “intercessor,” which is part of the role of an Advocate.

By calling the Holy Spirit “another Helper” comparing the Spirit’s role to His own, we can see that the Spirit intercedes for us before the throne of God, just as Jesus prayed for and continues to pray for His own disciples. The Spirit also, as “the Spirit of truth” teaches disciples the truth, just as Jesus was always patiently teaching His disciples during His earthly ministry. The Spirit also encourages, comforts, rebukes, corrects and leads, just as Jesus did for His disciples. He is the One called alongside us for life and also representing us through the Son before the Father.

As our Helper, our Advocate, our Counselor, our Paraklete, what benefits does the Spirit of truth bring to believers?

C. Blessing: *What benefits does the Spirit impart?*

Scottish covenanter pastor George Hutcheson identifies seven distinct benefits the Spirit brings to believers in his commentary on this passage:

1. **Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Christ comes to believers, not leaving them alone.** Jesus says, “*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*” How does Christ come to us as believers, so we are not left alone as orphans? He comes to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
2. **Through the Holy Spirit, believers gain a sight of Christ in their souls by faith.** Jesus then says, “*Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me.*” Now this does have an immediate physical fulfillment after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to the disciples. During the 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension, Jesus repeatedly appeared to disciples, even appearing to 500 disciples at one time, but He never showed Himself openly to the world.

Yet these words are not just for the eye-witnesses of the resurrection. We may not have seen Jesus with our eyes, but believers have and do behold Jesus with their souls by faith. We know His presence and the reality of His person in a powerful way that the world does not know. The world cannot “see” Jesus the way believers can, by faith. How are we able to know Jesus and behold Him by faith? Through the ministry of the

Spirit.

3. **The Spirit gives life, the life of Christ, to believers.** *“Because I live, you also will live.”* The Spirit takes the resurrection life of Jesus and imparts it to the soul of believers, bringing us from death to life forever. Then, the Spirit serves as the down-payment and seal, the earnest and guarantee, that our bodies will be resurrected with eternal life just as Jesus has been raised with eternal life.

4. **The Spirit gives believers knowledge of their intimate union with Christ and the Father.** Verse 20 is one of the most profoundly beautiful verses in all of Scripture to me: *“²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”* This theme of deep personal union with Christ will be repeated several times in these chapters, both in Jesus’ teaching and in His prayer for us. But think of how wonderful this is! Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we can know that Jesus is in the Father. As Jesus has said, *“I am my Father are one.”* And we know that. The Father and the Son enjoy perfect, undisturbed, unbreakable, intimate union forever.

Now get this: That same union Christ has with the Father, He also has with believers. We are in Christ and Christ is in us in the same wonderfully profound way – perfectly undisturbed, unbreakable and eternal intimate union. I have no words to describe it adequately as the comparison Jesus makes here is something beyond human comprehension. As Christ is in the Father, so we are in Him and He is in us.

5. **Through the Spirit, believers receive the Father’s love.** Verse 21 says, *“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”* Jesus is repeating here some of what He said in verse 15.

How do you know if you love Jesus or not? Well, it’s not really a good idea to trust in our subjective emotional experiences. Jesus gives us a way to assess ourselves: Do we have the commandments of Jesus and are we earnestly striving to keep them? If you don’t know what Jesus has commanded and you have no real interest in obeying Jesus, it’s impossible to claim you love Him. It would be like claiming to be married when you’ve taken no public vows and have no intention of marital fidelity. If I want to do whatever I want to do, how is Jesus my Lord? If I’m not repentant of my sins, how is Jesus my Savior?

Other passages would protect us from the snares of legalism or perfectionism. We cannot earn Jesus’ love or the Father’s love through our obedience. In fact, any obedience we do display in our lives comes as the fruit of the work of God’s Spirit, of

the love of God in us. We will never obey Jesus perfectly and God doesn't love us less when we fail, even when we fail a thousand times.

Here's the benefit: Through the Spirit, believers who love Jesus experience the love of the Father. They pray to God as their Father and know that He accepts and hears them with a Fatherly love that far outshines all earthly fatherly loves. Those who love Jesus are loved by the Father as a Father through the Spirit.

Romans 8:14-17 says, *“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”*

- 6. The Spirit teaches believers the things of Christ**, v. 25-26: *“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”*

Throughout the Gospels, the writers tell us how the disciples did not understand certain things Jesus had told them because they had not yet received the Spirit. Once the Spirit came, the disciples' understanding was enlightened. Just read Peter's sermon at Pentecost from Acts 2 and imagine Peter giving that sermon a couple of months earlier during Jesus' earthly ministry. No way, right? He needed the Spirit.

As believers, we need the Holy Spirit to teach us the Scriptures. And He does. The Spirit helps us understand the Scriptures, often through the ministry of pastors and teachers, men of God filled with the Spirit.

Not only does the Spirit help us understand, but He also brings to mind the things we have learned when we need them. Jesus said the Spirit *“will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”* We don't just need to understand the Scriptures, we also need to remember them when we need them. It's one thing to understand what God means when He says, *“Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.”* It's another thing to remember and believe that precious promise of Scripture when we need it most. The Spirit does both things for us.

Finally, the 7th benefit the Spirit brings to believers is peace. But not just any peace:

7. The Spirit gives us the peace of Christ, v. 27 *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”*

People expend an extraordinary amount of time, money and energy in the pursuit of peace. One in six Americans takes some kind of psychiatric drug, mostly antidepressants. People work hard thinking success will give them peace. People spend money buying nice things thinking nice things will give them peace. People spend money to go on amazing vacations, thinking amazing experiences will give them peace. People do daring things, thinking an adrenaline rush will give them peace. All of these things can be good gifts from God and can have their place in our lives, but none of them can give us peace.

The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau had an ongoing correspondence with a young Parisian woman name Henriette. In one of her letters, Henriette discloses the trouble she’s having sleeping because of her unsettled mind and heart. She writes, “I would be so happy if only I could find some peace, even at the cost of looking foolish.”

Jesus promises believers the gift of a peace the world cannot give and does not understand: His own peace. Jesus doesn’t just promise to give us peace. He promises to give us His own peace and to give it not as the world gives, with broken promises and hollow dreams that never become reality. What Jesus gives is real, lasting, personal, absolute, unshakable peace, His own peace.

Because of Jesus’ peace and only because of Jesus’ peace, He can say, *“Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”* This is now the second time Jesus has said *“Let not your hearts be troubled,”* connecting verse 27 all the way back to verse 1. This is what Jesus wants for us. This is the destination where He is taking us, following His lead, walking in His footsteps, empowered by the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit, our Helper.

But how can Jesus give us His own peace? He can do so because we are in Him and He is in us. We belong to Him and He belongs to us, thus whatever assets and resources He has become ours and whatever troubles or needs we have become His. If you are flat broke and at the end of all of your resources but you marry a billionaire, suddenly you have all the resources of the billionaire. Your debts are all settled and your assets are now increased immensely.

But we are not joined to a billionaire. We are joined to Jesus. Jesus has something no billionaire’s bank account could ever hold: Peace. Real peace.

Application

Do you believe you have the peace of Christ from Christ Himself in Christ Himself?

- You say, “But I’m so weak.” Jesus takes your weakness and gives you His strength.
- You say, “But I’m so afraid.” Jesus takes your fear and gives you His courage.
- You say, “But I’ve sinned so much.” Jesus takes your sin and gives you His righteousness. He gives it to you when He gives you Himself.
- You say, “But I feel so far from God.” Jesus says, “I take those who are far away and I bring them near through my blood, shed on the cross.”
- You say, “I just don’t know.” Jesus says, “I give you the Spirit of truth, and He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

How differently we would live our lives if we believed what Jesus is saying here! To walk by faith and not by sight is to see more truly than our eyes could ever see, to walk in the light of life and to live in the light of the truth of Jesus, receiving His peace and living for His glory!

How do we do this? How do we live this way? Looking to Jesus for guidance, we love Jesus and we seek to obey His commands. We don’t do so hoping to prove how good we are so we can earn the Holy Spirit. We do so with a longing and a hungering for Jesus. We do so trusting in God the Father’s gracious love and provision and we trust in Jesus as our all-sufficient Savior. We get on our knees in the Scriptures every morning. We worship the Lord on our own, with our family at home, and with the gathered church each Lord’s Day morning, not out of routine or a sense of duty, but out of love and longing for more of Jesus, for more of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

If you are a true believer, you cannot lose the indwelling presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says the Spirit “*be with you forever*” that “*he dwells with you and will be in you.*” You can’t lose that, but the Bible tells us we can grieve the Spirit and we can quench the Spirit. So, we can live in ways that bring more fruit from the Holy Spirit into our lives and we can live in ways that grieve or quench the Spirit. As we transition into chapter 15 next week, we’ll see what patterns of fruitfulness look like in the life of the believer. But it begins with faith and comes through the power of the Holy Spirit and the benefits and blessings He brings into our lives.