

What Jesus Says about the Holy Spirit

Today's New Testament reading is John 14:15-27, where Jesus' instructed his disciples about the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, who would be the one who would keep them from feeling abandoned after Jesus would return to heaven to be with the Father in his glory.

Follow as I read **John 14:15-27**.

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

¹⁸ "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵ "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Growing up in a Baptist church in Ohio, I remember having heard very little preaching about the Holy Spirit. Because of some excesses and controversies about the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, faith healing, and other phenomena, there seemed to be a fear of broaching the subject. Ironically, my home church in Columbus was split over the doctrine of the Holy Spirit when my pastor, who had for so long avoided teaching about the Holy Spirit, became a somewhat militant charismatic and led a large group away from our church to form a Pentecostal congregation. I saw in my home church a swing from "charis-phobia" to "charis-mania."

Most Christians today are in a complete fog about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Packer). The late James Boice said that for the average Christian, the Holy Spirit means little more than the spirit of Christmas! It's time for us to get over our neglect of and fear of teaching and preaching about the Third Person of the Trinity. We should no more fear learning about the Holy Spirit than we do about fearing to know more about the Father and the Son, since these are all the One God who is mysteriously in three persons.

It's important to know what Jesus says about the Holy Spirit as a gift from God. Jesus reminds his disciples that those who know him by faith that generates love and obedience are given the gift of the Holy Spirit (15-17), "another Advocate," literally, The Paraclete, which in Greek means the one called alongside to help, like an advocate in court, who speaks to the Father in our defense whenever we need grace and forgiveness (1 Jn. 2:1).

In Scripture, the Triune God is revealed as one God who has made himself known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He's one in nature, purpose and will, yet he manifests himself in three ways. All three are the same God, yet the Father is first in glory, power and authority; the Son is second as he obeys, glorifies and perfectly reveals the nature of the Father in his incarnation; and the Holy Spirit is God who reveals and glorifies the Son and works on earth in the lives of his children.

Jesus equates the coming of the Holy Spirit as his and the Father's coming to live in us (23). Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as being "Christ in you" and of our having the mind of Christ and of being led by the Spirit of Jesus (Col. 1:27; 1 Cor. 2:16; Acts 16:7). We don't have to worry about being too precise even as we address God in prayer. We can address the Holy Spirit, Jesus (Acts 7:59), or the heavenly Father and still we are calling upon God.

The Holy Spirit lives in every child of God (15-16), since conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus told Nicodemus, we must be born "from above," given new life by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8). Since the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, all the truly converted who commit to follow Jesus are immediately given the indwelling Holy Spirit. We can't claim to be children of God if we don't have the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9). Jesus speaks of his and the Father's coming to us through the Paraclete, our Helper, who is God with us right now on earth.

Now that we have received the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is at work every day to make us like Jesus. But the degree to which he changes, uses and blesses us is dependent on our willingness to love and obey him. When we disobey and resist his will, we grieve him (make him sad) and put out the flames that would otherwise bless and empower us for life and service (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians. 5:19).

Our mission is to join with the Father and the Son, enabled by the Holy Spirit, in doing kingdom work which Jesus began in his earthly mission. For most of us, the first place we need Holy Spirit enabling is in our ministry in our own homes, with our siblings, spouses, children and grandchildren. The Spirit produces in our lives daily, and in increasing measure, the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23 and 2 Peter 1:5-8). We, by the Spirit, are daily becoming more like Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). Our mission is simply to follow and serve Jesus in the power of the

Holy Spirit. By life and words we simply announce the Good News to those with whom the Holy Spirit is already at work. We join Jesus in his work as he lives his life in us and as us.

How helpless and perhaps even desperately anxious the disciples felt, realizing their Lord was leaving them! They would be vulnerable to the same enemies that dogged Jesus' steps and who would eventually crucify their Lord. But Jesus gives some powerful and encouraging words to them and to us. The Paraclete is the Helper. Jesus assured these disciples they would not be left unprotected and vulnerable like orphans, who were the absolutely weak and defenseless of Jesus' day (verse 18). What comfort and strength these words have been to me during times when I have felt especially weak, lonely and vulnerable!

The Holy Spirit is graciously at work even in the ordinary. For example, the neighborhood where we lived in Belgium had been assailed by a series of burglaries. The usual method that this thief used or those thieves used to gain entrance into houses was to drill a hole in the door and use a device to turn the door handle on the inside. The house we rented had only one door where this method could possibly be employed, and that's the back door leading outside onto the patio. But I had thought the handle on that door was simply too heavy to be turned from the outside.

In the wee hours one morning I was awakened by a loud male voice, saying "Roger!" Usually when I dream things like this I struggle to answer in my sleep. But this voice clearly awakened me, and when I awoke I answered, "What?" Not knowing "what," I got up and used the water closet and returned to bed to sleep. When I awakened at 5:00 I went to my chair near this back door where I have my quiet time, and discovered the door was open. A hole had been drilled, and the handle turned upward, and the door opened. As I later shared with the police, evidently the burglar had heard my stirring, or even the same voice that sharply called to me, and was frightened away. In any case, I sensed we had been visited by an angel of the Lord, who protected our belongings and perhaps us as well.

As Nancy and I reflected on this experience, we gave thanks for God's protection. This doesn't mean those of you who've been robbed are not better Christians than we are! Nor does it mean that God promises we'll always be sheltered from robberies or even physical harm. But our little episode was a reminder of how God is able to protect. He is worthy of our full trust. The Holy Spirit is our constant Helper. As our Paraclete/Helper, he is the "Jesus who comes alongside us." If we've fallen and are too weak to get up on our own, he lifts us up. If we're weary in running the race, or are feeling weak and vulnerable to temptation, he comes along side to put his arms around us and run and walk with us, and protect us from the Tempter, Satan, who would harm us.

As some of you likely did, I helped our two children ride their first bicycles after the training wheels were removed. Like a Paraclete/Helper, I would walk alongside them and steady the bike until they could “get the hang of it,” and ride off on their own. Sometimes I’d then have to run to them and pick them up after their fall. But the great thing about the Holy Spirit is that he is always alongside us, to help us and keep us from falling or to pick us up. He even helps us when we pray (Rom. 8:26; Jude 20).

The Apostle Paul says that instead of grieving the Holy Spirit we must be continually filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). To be filled with the Spirit doesn’t mean we need more of him. It means we allow him to rule in all of our lives (mind, body, spirit, emotions, and thoughts), filling all of us with himself. We don’t need to “get more of him.” We need instead to allow him to have more of us.

How he desires to live in and rule and bless us! There is no substitute for his presence as our Helper. How tragic also to offend his royal presence and his perfect love by selfish, sinful behavior, attitudes and thoughts, and just by ignoring him. The Holy Spirit is God at home in our hearts to be our strength and our wisdom as our teacher (26). In times of difficulty I’ve never ceased to be amazed at the way the Holy Spirit faithfully teaches and encourages me with truths and promises from God’s word (Rom. 15:4). And his presence in me gives peace that transcends all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

By being justified we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). As we live in step with the Holy Spirit, we have the peace of God that Jesus speaks about in verse 27 and Paul describes for us in Philippians 4:7. Jesus says the world, which often promotes peace, cannot give the peace that God can give. The peace of God will guard our hearts and minds like a garrison/bodyguard (Phil. 4:7).

The glorious God over all his creation desires to live and rule in our hearts! Are we treating him as the honored guest so that he’s at home in our hearts (23)? Amos the prophet says that two cannot walk together unless they agree to do so (3:3). Try asking your spouse to take a walk with you while you’re in the middle of a spat. She or he’s likely to tell you to take a hike! You can continue to coexist in separate parts of the house, but you can’t walk together and truly live together unless you’re on speaking terms. If we live surrendered to God’s will, and seek to walk in step with the Holy Spirit, we’ll enjoy his presence.

The Holy Spirit is “God with us” and “Christ in us.” He who lives within us is no less God than the Father who created and who watches over us and the Christ who died for us and is now reigning at the right hand of God the Father. We need to feel at home with the Holy Spirit. If we’re not living in step with the Spirit, then we’re grieving him. Those of us who know him, how we desperately need to be in step with him, and to depend on him to steady us, teach us, and give us strength and balance for godliness and fruitful service. I realize how I totally

depend on the Holy Spirit to strengthen my ministry in this place. What God wants to do through my life, only the Holy Spirit can do.

Jesus taught us to keep on asking, seeking and knocking in order to receive God's blessings; and the greatest gift the Father gives is the Holy Spirit, who is the key to every other spiritual blessing (Luke 11:9-13). The command Paul gives in Ephesians 5:18 is that we "keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit." We must live each day in a spirit of desperate dependence on the Lord Jesus, and are to live as though our lives were a continuing prayer for the Holy Spirit to keep on infusing us with divine power and wisdom and grace for all the fruit of the Spirit. Every day we need what the Holy Spirit alone can give us—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, self-control, wisdom and perseverance.

I invite you to join me today in a new commitment to believe what Jesus says about the Holy Spirit, and to seek all that he means to be in us and do for us. Does the Holy Spirit live in you? Is he at home in your heart?