

The Holy Spirit . The Comforter

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What God is doing through us is amazing. I would like to speak to you this morning about the Holy Spirit. We have expectations of what and who God is and what the Holy Spirit can do in our lives no matter how many years you've walked with the Lord. We also have expectations of our brothers and sisters in God, of the church and church government. That is observable since over the years a lot of people's expectations were not met. Whatever they were, these people had expectations and they weren't met so they went to a church someplace else. I remember reading a commentary once that said the reason the church in the United States prospers so well is because people can go anywhere they want if their expectations are not met. However, in other countries, if you don't like what's going on, "Too bad." But God is a God of wondrous inventiveness in creation and creativity. And so, what He does in our midst is to use "that which was thrown away," the things nobody else cared about, even dead things (Ezekiel 37:1-4) come to life, become the source of life in the world. And so, the Holy Spirit is like that.

Shifting gears a little bit, when Jesus walked upon the earth He introduced the Holy Spirit in a different way than was known before. The Holy Spirit was not unknown to the prophets of the Old Testament where people were filled with the Spirit. But there is something new that came into being with the coming of Jesus. It is interesting that with the idea as presented by our Lord, people's expectations *changed*.

Let's go back to the word expectations, what you have in me and what you have in your brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's take an example: someone is sick and they go to the emergency room and they are in the hospital the next day. Our expectations could be that the pastors or the elders of the church will go visit them and pray for them. Or those in the home-group should go and pray for them and care for them. When that doesn't happen, people get disgruntled and they could say, "*Oh, this church doesn't love enough. The Holy Spirit isn't moving in that way. I'm going to another place.*" Expectations of what their brothers and sisters meant to them, weren't met.

Well the scripture is clear that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Therefore if you are not giving, you are just as guilty as the one who condemns. In fact one of the things we used to teach about home-groups from the very beginning was that we needed to *not* be artificially related to the church. Just because we come here on Sunday and say we are a part of this church doesn't mean that we are integrated in the way we should be, so that people know us and care about us. Caring is not artificial. It is real. So the expectation of a real, caring person can only happen when there is a relationship of caring that happens on a day-to-day basis. For instance, if somebody comes to visit you in the hospital and has never seen you before, they may care for you and empathize and feel

your pain, identify with what you are going through, but they are not related to you in any way, shape or form. There is a disconnect, an artificial process. I know as every time I used to go to the Benedictine Hospital as a patient, the first one to meet me there would be one of the nuns. They asked if they could pray for me and I said, “*Absolutely. Sure.*” And they had prayers of compassion but what I was really looking for were those people, who were integrated into my life, coming to me and showing me how much they loved me and cared for me. That’s the characteristic of the Holy Spirit that Jesus came to this earth to demonstrate and present to us. If we try to take the place of the Holy Spirit, as individuals, you are going to find that you come up short.

“*I can do it. I can care. I can pray.*” Yeah, you can but there is a power of the Holy Spirit and a caring and a loving nature of the Holy Spirit that only He can fulfill. He can fulfill it in and through you. But it is ultimately Him.

One God: Monotheism

Well when Jesus came, the problem the Pharisees and the Scribes were having we can find in this verse:

(Deuteronomy 6:4-5) ⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Not three, not two, One God.

Along comes Jesus introducing a relationship of a loving and caring Father. Historically in some scripture God was often referred to as God the Father but not in the Old Testament. It wasn’t until Jesus arrived that He over and over again emphasized His relationship with God as *Father* God! In fact He taught us how to pray that way, “*Our Father Who is in heaven. . .*” Paul says that the Spirit gives us such a revelation that we call Him “*Abba, Daddy, Dear Dad.*” This is a great relationship much different from what was happening on Earth before Jesus came in the flesh. In fact, the Pharisees confront Jesus.

John 8:53 ⁵³Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?”

Boy, that’s a good question, “*Who do You make Yourself out to be!? What is Your expectation, our expectation of You?*” What is going to happen? Jesus answered.

⁵⁴ *“If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father (again relationship) who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. ⁵⁵ Yet you have not known Him, (knowing is a very powerful word here, not just knowing about Him, but knowing Him) but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”*

What? What did You just say? Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see My day?! There is an eternity, time-warp going on here.

⁵⁷ *Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”*

That word “I Am” is the very word and name of God, Yahweh, not just the English “I am.” Well in the Old Testament this goes right back to the verse we just read in Deuteronomy. If you don’t believe there is One God, you are mistaken. Jesus is claiming to be God! Right out, flat, no disguising it. He said, *“I AM God. I AM. I’m the One who said ‘I AM’ in the very beginning.”*

⁵⁹ *Then they took up stones to throw at Him (as was the Law to do so); but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

I love that. If Jesus isn’t finished with you, don’t worry about it, He’ll come back. So Jesus says, and here it is, *“I AM, I’m not only the Son of God, I AM. I was there in the beginning. Abraham rejoiced when he saw My day.”*

Introducing the Holy Spirit

John:32 ³²And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.

Wow, unbelievable. The Holy Spirit is now introduced into the Trinity and to the concept of who God is. By the way, the word Trinity is never found in the New Testament, but the “Father, Son and Holy Spirit are.” We can call it whatever we want. In fact there is still only One God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. So we can see this verse in Deuteronomy6:4-5 is fulfilled, only the Pharisees didn’t have to eyes to see it. This is interesting, John the Baptist was considered THE best prophet of the Old Testament. Jesus said that anyone in the new Kingdom, the New Testament was of better standing than him. But John was a prophet and here he is prophesying.

(John 1:32-34) ³² And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³ I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

What! He Who sent John to baptize with water (God the Father and the Holy Spirit had a relationship with John.) "*. . . said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending . . .'*" So this is really a prophecy John is getting. "*. . . upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. 'And I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God.'*" In other words, John is prophesying what he heard the Father say, "*When you see someone you are baptizing, the Holy Spirit is going to come down upon Him and remain with Him, that's the Son of God.*" Isn't that cool!

The Holy Spirit comes down and Jesus gets touched by the Holy Spirit and everybody walks away and goes to lunch?? No. Let's take this all the way to the crucifixion. That Holy Spirit *remained* upon Him and still remained upon Him as He was being crucified to do the Father's will. The Spirit was still upon Him to show the relationship Jesus had with the Father. Even when He looked to heaven and said, "*Father, why have You forsaken me?*" The Holy Spirit did not depart from Him as some may teach. Even if Jesus *felt* like the eyes of the Father were wandering away (as God could not look upon sin as Jesus became sin), the Holy Spirit still remained on the Son of God. So Jesus could, at that point upon the cross, draw upon the strength of the relationship that He had with the Father through the Holy Spirit. I sure bet He did! Absolutely. When I'm in pain, I'm in the ER, I'm in the hospital and you are not coming to visit me, I know there is still One who is going to be there. He was there at the Cross too. I don't think He'd disappear, "*Well it's time for Me to leave now.*" He didn't go. He'll never leave you.

Do we like that? Yes, that's cool. Let that sink in. Wow. It occurred to me that I really don't know Him the way I really need to know the Holy Spirit. Paul said that, "*Oh, that I would know Him.*" Jesus just said, "*I know the Father. You don't have a clue, but I know Him. If I said that I didn't know Him I would be a liar.*"

Receiving the Holy Spirit

Here is an interesting scripture. Many believe that this is the baptism in the Spirit; it is not. Jesus turned to his disciples.

(John 20:21) ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

The Holy Spirit is not just going to give them a breath of life, but He is going to give them wisdom. It was the *breath* of the Spirit as Jesus breathed upon them. We almost don't have the right to send anyone out on a mission without the Holy Spirit. I remember there were some disciples that thought they could prophesy and cast out demons in Jesus' name, and the demons didn't even know them. The demon said, “*I know Jesus. And I know Paul, but I don't know you.*” And he beat these guys up! That's not a good place to be.

Wait for the Power from on High

I know that wasn't the baptism in the Holy Spirit since after Jesus was resurrected, coming out of the grave, He was talking with His disciples.

(Luke 24:46-49) ⁴⁶ Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

The Promise of the Father is what? The Holy Spirit, but it is only the Promise before the crucifixion. “*I send the Promise upon you.*” He breathed upon them. The Promise was there but now He says, “*But wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with the power from on high.*” The power of the Spirit needs to be released within you, then it is no longer a Promise. It becomes a reality! The Holy Spirit is full of power. I always thought about Him as a Teacher, Helper and the Power and ability to overcome. All those things are true, but here is a critical focus for many doctrines.

Another Helper, the Holy Spirit, the Teacher

(John 14:15-18) ¹⁵ “If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ *I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*”

So Who is the first Helper? Jesus. Sometimes the language is too obvious. But this other Helper, that *“He may abide with you forever.”* He is never going to leave you. You will always have the Holy Spirit no matter how dark the cavern. No matter where you go. The Spirit of Truth. That’s it. We know He is the Teacher so He’d better have the Spirit of Truth.

“Whom the world cannot receive.” Why? Because they do not know Truth. Because they neither see Him nor know Him. *“But you know Him.”* This word “know” comes back into play. You now have a relationship with the Holy Spirit. Knowing isn’t just knowing about Him; you know Him! He dwells with you and will be in you. After the release of the Spirit in Acts chapter 4, Jesus promises, *“You know what? I am never going to leave you as orphans. I will come to you.”* How does Jesus come to us? In the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is presenting a whole new, true way of looking at God and Who He is, the God relationship with you, not just externally as your coach, telling you what to do and what not to do. *But, a God who you know.* So, no matter what Emergency room you are in, or what hospital you find yourself, or what automobile accident you may unfortunately be in, He will always be there.

(John 14:25-26) ²⁵ *“These things I have spoken to you while being present 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 things that I said to you.”*

You almost don’t have to prepare for your teaching. More importantly we prepare to know the Holy Spirit as you are speaking to people about God, whether it is one-on-one or one-to-a-hundred-fifty.

(John 27-28) 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 heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* ²⁸ *You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I.”*

Rejoice. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is with you! You’ve got it. You are “infected,” like leaven. Do you know what leaven is? It is a yeast they put into bread. You’ve got it. They rejoiced because He is going to send the Holy Spirit. Amen. Now let’s go back to the Old Testa-

ment. This word Helper is also translated by others as the Comforter, Helper, Teacher. How can those all come together into one word?

Paraclete

That one word as used in this text is Paraclete, not Paracletes but singular, Paraclete. Paraclete is a Greek word but it goes back to another word in Hebrew the foundation of that word and it goes all the way back to Job. Interestingly, Job had a lot of problems. God had blessed him, allowed Satan to come and test him. Job had every possible form of catastrophe happen in his life, his family, all of his wealth, his body and finally, he'd had it.

He cannot take any more. Who comes to help him? His three friends come just like we come to each other many times. *"I know why you are sick, brother. I know why you are having this problem with your family. I know this is what you need to do. Here's what the bible says to do. So just straighten out! Fly right. Get back on track. Get in between the lines. Do it right this time!"* Etcetera. That is really what the summation of what Job's three friends were doing, giving him good advice but did Job feel any compassion? Did he feel the caring nature of God in heaven in them? So Job used the word paraclete.

(Job 16:1) ¹ Then Job answered and said: ² "I have heard many such things; Miserable comforters are you all!"

Job's expectations were not met. And so, if you come and pray with someone and he's going through trials, and you are counseling with them, and you think you can give them good advice . . . some miserable counselor you are. You need to hear from the Holy Spirit and care like the Holy Spirit cares, release the Holy Spirit within them so they can see that He is a caring and loving God! Now we are getting down to it.

(Romans 8:15) ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

"Daddy. Dad, I need you." The other day I wasn't feeling up to par. I asked the Holy Spirit to come and minister to me. That's when He spoke to me prophetically saying, *"You know, Peter, you don't get it."* It's three o'clock in the morning and I thought, *"What am I supposed to get at 3 am?"* He said, *"You know, I am the Comforter and, by the way, Peter, **I am really good at what I do!** I'm not just fair. I'm not just four out of five. I'm not even score-able. I'm really good at what I do."*

Summary: The Comforter is Really Good at What He Does

So let's pretend. Cheryl, my wife, is not feeling well and I go over to her and put my arm around her and say, "*Honey, I really feel your pain and understand what you are going through.*" She has stomach cramps. I'm praying for her. There is only so much I can do. I thought to myself, "*That's what You do, Lord, right? Comfort us.*" The Lord says, "*Right. When I put My arm around you and say not to worry. It is not going to be bad. It's going to get better. Guess what? Those aren't just words, it is true!*" The Holy Spirit said, "*Don't worry. It is going to get better.*" It will get better. So who can comfort Cheryl? Me or the Holy Spirit! Who can comfort you? Another or the Holy Spirit? You choose. Because when the Holy Spirit comes He is the Spirit of Truth and Revelation of the whole thing that God has created in you. And, He will never desert you or leave you or forsake you. And so when He comes, I'm not just encouraged. He is not just comforting but he is bringing me into a new place to know who I am even a sick bed, in a hospital, even in the Emergency room, even in a place where I'm fed up with having this cold or this sore throat, or whatever other things we are going through.

So I turned to the Lord and said, "*Amen. Go for it. Tell me how much You love me.*" See it is the relationship of love that is foundational in our relationship with the Holy Spirit, our relationship with Jesus, our relationship with the Father. It is NOT knowing Him artificially but it is an organic, fundamental love that is true and absolute. When that comes we not only feel good, but there is a joy that comes from within. No matter how we feel in our bodies, no matter how many problems we have in our circumstances, we know that Jesus Christ is Lord in it! He is standing with us and He will never leave us or forsake us. That's why I know, on the Cross, the Holy Spirit didn't leave the Lord.

Ready? Jesus and the Holy Spirit are saying to you, "*I am really good at what I do. Let Me do it. Open up and let Me do it. Let Me comfort you. Let Me be the friends that Job could never have.*" It is interesting this word Helper is Comforter, Teacher. It is also an Advocate as in a lawyer or law office, or when you are standing before the court, an Advocate for you. In our culture if we see a lawyer standing in a court of law we tend to not trust them "at all costs". Never mind to hold us up in prayer and give us good advice. We always ask friends first. In the world, people trust their bartenders more than they trust anyone else.

I am going to end with Revelations 3: 20, Jesus speaking to the church of Laodicea. Remember them? Their problem was being lukewarm. Could that sound like us? *“Oh yeah, I need the Holy Spirit. I need to be filled with the fire of God.”*

Really? Do you say it like you mean it? Or with zeal and emotion? ***“I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and the Fire of God!”***

(Romans 3:20) ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

He’s going to stand there and knock just as long as it takes for you to answer the door. You are going to have dinner with Jesus. If you want to have breakfast with President Donald Trump it might cost you \$50 on the internet if you get picked. But that’s not what this means. When you dine or sup with someone in the New Testament culture, you are partaking with them, life, the life of the Holy Spirit. You are together enjoying one another, together experiencing the flavors of the food and the wonderful company and fellowship, free association of ideas and the creativity of God. Something can happen between you and Jesus. You will be lukewarm no longer. *“I don’t know if Jesus can do this?”* But Jesus says, *“I’m really good at what I do. I’m amazing. There is none better.”* There is no apostle, no pastor, no home-group relationship that’s better than the Holy Spirit. No matter how much I love my wife, Cheryl, no matter how much I keep falling in love with her, she can never take the place of the Holy Spirit in my life. She will never be as good.

You see there is a “hole” inside us. He doesn’t want us to fill this place with something or someone else. He wants us to release what He put within us, that we can show each other how wonderful it is to be filled with the Spirit. It isn’t boring at all! Let’s talk about the classical understanding of “being filled with the Spirit.” In Acts chapter 4, they tarried and were waiting in Jerusalem and the Spirit descended upon them and they were all “filled with the Spirit,” and began speaking in other tongues. That is really an event, not just a growth process, but an event, just like being water-baptized, in which they were filled with the Spirit. And there was a manifestation of the Spirit within them; they were speaking with tongues. There are other manifestations Paul talks about over and over again and he does that in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, the nine gifts of the Spirit. In Galatians 5:22, all those gifts are for the nine fruits of the Spirit. In Romans 13:4, he talks about the functional gifts of the Spirit. Later on in 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul talks about ministries of the Spirit.

So let's take the gift of administration of the Spirit, for example. It is important to note, this function is incorporating the basic aspects of a Spirit-led life into the function of administration. It isn't the fact that administration in itself is a gift but rather, how it is administered. You can be really good at administration but you had better have a word of wisdom and a word of knowledge. You better have the heart of God. You had better be able to know Him and when that happens, you can administer in church government, being an apostle, prophet etc. Do not try to function without knowing Him, or else you will find yourself falling far short of the grace of God.

Apostle Paul says.

(Corinthians 14:5)⁵ I wish you all spoke with tongues, . . .

Wouldn't it be nice if we all came here this morning and everyone had a manifestation of the Holy Spirit! In fact we do, but with some it is just harder to see than in others. You have all these "garments" on and you don't want anybody to see how much you love Jesus. Let me warn you. That's not a good thing to do. If the Holy Spirit is tugging at your heart to say something, to say a prayer, to give an exhortation, to read a scripture, it doesn't have to be much. You can stand up and say, *"You know this week God showed me something that was deeper than I ever thought it could be, that He just loved me for who I was."* I've heard prophesies such as that and they changed people's lives because it was the Holy Spirit.

When you don't allow the Holy Spirit to work through and in you, you are in danger of continually hardening your heart against the purposes and the will of God in your life, whether it is talking one-on-one to someone or in church or in prayer. Prophetic prayers, by the way, are very, very powerful. I remember in one home-group I attended, a girl said she had never spoken in tongues. But I said, *"Yeah well, when you pray I know where the prayer is coming from and that's a prophetic prayer. You pray the heart of God over and over and over again. Without it we would all be missing a great gift in our midst."* So people may come and say, this church doesn't have the expectations that I want, and they leave. They don't understand, it is the Holy Spirit within them that needs to be awakened! Their own lukewarmness in the process of being related to each other is the real problem. Jesus is going to knock on your heart until you give in. It may be just a gift of helps; that's a gift of the Spirit too. It is actually mentioned.

And so, what are we saying? I'm trying to awaken within you something the Lord was trying to awaken within me at three o'clock in

the morning. He isn't just the Holy Spirit whom I believe in. He isn't just the Holy Spirit that is part of the Trinity. He isn't just the Holy Spirit that I need and who reveals the truth and revelation to me. He is the Holy Spirit that is absolutely THE BEST Person (and He is a **Person**) who can minister to me what I need at any time, any moment. I know that it is going to be in love. I know it is going to be a word of encouragement, not one of fear and dismay. I have seen the enemy come into our midst. He comes a lot of times as sickness and disease. I've seen him come. But we want to awake the Holy Spirit within us. What do you think the Holy Spirit wants to do? How about the prayer of Faith!

Praying for one another! You know even if it doesn't happen up in front of the church. If you don't have the where withal to come up front and stand and wait, even if it happens there where you are sitting, before church or just after.

People can pray for one another, in home-group, in times of meeting, whenever we meet. One of the things I'm noticing in our culture that's changing and shifting radically, Facebook, Twitter, etc. These things are a culture too. Facebook has people you touch every day. It is interesting I've prayed for more people on Facebook during this week than I've prayed for you guys. There's something wrong with that! People are asking for prayer more than you are. There's something wrong with that. Facebook is kind of artificial, isn't it? You guys are real. God put you in my life. Let's make a point to pray for each other. To prophesy to each other.

When Jessica was reading the scripture today (Ezekiel 37 the valley of dry bones) she wasn't just reading; she was actually prophesying. Couldn't we hear it! She was filled with the Holy Spirit and she wanted to impart to us something that the Holy Spirit had put into her. Just so, you have something too. Amen.

Let's pray: Lord, we pray for mercy that Your loving kindness would go forth to handle this darkness which we face on a day-to-day basis, not that we have the answers like Job's friends. They did have answers but it isn't just answers that we want. We want Your heart. We want Your Holy Spirit to be imparted to and from us. That the Spirit would shine forth like a bright, shining star, one that cannot be put out, one that cannot be put out nor fade away. We pray for Your mercy and Your grace to be poured out even more in this day and in this hour than ever before. We come against sickness and disease in our midst, kidneys stones, breathing problems, colds, high blood pressure, low blood pres-

sure, knee problems, back pain, hip pain, all these things that are plaguing us. Oh Father, we ask You, Lord God, to intervene. You are the Healer! You want to heal us, Lord God. Help us to learn to pray for each other, again. Awaken these bones. In Jesus' name. Hallelujah!!!