

The Comforter

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[0 : 0 0] Chapter 14 in the Gospel by John. And I want to read with you again from verse 15. I say again because you will remember that over the past number of weeks prior to our going on holiday, we actually made a detailed study of this chapter. But I want to turn with me now to verse 15, reading from verse 15. If you love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.

Now you remember that we noticed that the primary purpose of Christ in giving this discourse to his disciples was in order to comfort them on account of the fact that he was soon to leave them. And that was something that they found most difficult to accept or understand, because they couldn't imagine what life would be like without the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so he says to them, you will remember, let not your heart be troubled.

Ye believe in God, believe also in me. And so on. And then he promises them another Comforter who will come to be with them and abide with them forever. And you will remember that together we learned that the word Paraclete, which is translated Comforter, means one who will stay beside or stay alongside, stand alongside. And this was the promise of the Holy Spirit, who would be personally present to comfort and be alongside his people, whilst Christ went to heaven to intercede there for his own, until such time as he would come back again and take his own to be with himself. There would be no need then for the Comforter anymore. But in the meantime, the Comforter was going to remain.

Now, Christ has been exhorting his disciples in the context of these words to keep his commandments. If you love me, keep my commandments. And you will remember how we sought to find out together what it was to keep the commandments of Christ. But we know that anyone who tries, who endeavors to keep the commandments of Christ, is made very conscious of the fact that he or she cannot really do so.

The more we try to keep the commands of Christ, the more conscious we are of our inability to do so. Now, there are some who find this no problem at all. It is no problem whatsoever for them to keep the commands of Christ. Were you to approach them and ask them if they are doing this, they will tell you quite plainly, yes, of course I am. I am doing no one any harm. I am doing quite well. I am having no problem at all.

[3 : 2 0] And then there are, that is, the worldly man will say that. But then the godly man, that is, the seeming godly man will do that also. There are people who are, according to the law, faultless in their own estimation because of their godliness. Remember, Paul the apostle as Saul of Tarsus was like that. He tells us in the epistle to the Philippians that as a Pharisee, he was according to the law blameless. Now, Paul believed that about himself as he endeavored to please God in his Pharisaic condition as a Jew. And there are people like that in the world tonight. Very religious people, outwardly religious people, and very, who are, who are, who are, who are, keeping as it were to the letter of the law, which we were discussing this morning. They're very religious people, and they find it no real difficulty as it were to keep the law.

It is their delight to do so, in a sense. Don't get me wrong, I'm not, I'm not meaning by that, that the delight in the law of God, according to the inward man. Not at all. But that is their religion, and their hope of heaven is based upon how good they are, and what they are doing, and have done. That is in keeping the law. There was another man, you will remember, whom we read in scripture, who was a young man, a rich young man, a rich young ruler indeed. And when Christ brought before him the law, oh, he said, these have I kept from my youth up. He had no hesitation in saying that he had kept the law of God. Now, it is obvious that that young man knew absolutely nothing about the spirituality of God's law. But this is something that the true believer knows. He or she knows that the law is spiritual.

The believer in Christ, who wishes more than anything else to keep the commands of Christ, finds that an impossibility. Do you find that tonight? Can you say with the same man who once said that he was according to the law, that he was blameless?

Now saying, the good that I would, I do not. Oh, I would like to do good. There is nothing I would like more than to do good. But the evil that I would not, that I do, Paul now says, as a new man in Christ, he is only too conscious of the fact that he is a sinner, and that on account of sin, he comes terribly short of the requirements of God's law.

He feels and senses himself as one who is undone, as one who is unclean, as one who comes short in everything. He finds another law within his members, warring against the law of his mind.

[6 : 30] Now my friends, you know that about yourself tonight, if you are a believer in Christ.

But there is someone else who knows it also, and that is Christ himself. He knows it. And he knew it from all eternity. And so he has provided one who will help us in fulfilling what Christ requires of us.

Christ knows that when he says to his disciples, if you love me, keep my commandments, he knows that they are not going to be able to do that of themselves.

He knows that they are going to be only too conscious of the fact that they are not living up to what Christ requires of them. And so he promises them the Comforter, one who will stand alongside them, beside them, one who will help them, one who will provide what is needed, what is necessary for them to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Not that anyone will keep Christ's commands perfectly, that Christ himself did for us. We thank God tonight that that is so.

[7 : 53] He did that. And he did it for us. He fulfilled the law. He completed everything for us. Friend, you feel tonight perhaps there is very little hope for you because you have been such an awful sinner and you find that there is nothing in you that is good at all.

In fact, as you are sitting here in church, maybe you are feeling that you would rather be anywhere else than here. And it may be that God the Holy Spirit is convincing you of that fact.

And you say, well, what am I to do about it? Can I do anything about it? You cannot, but God can. He can. He can give you grace whereby you will embrace the law of God, love the law of God, love the Lord himself.

Not completely, not perfectly. That cannot be. Although that is our goal. That must be our goal. That must be our aim because God says, be ye holy for I am holy.

Now, I have come back to this part of God's word tonight because I feel very strongly that in the present climate of opinion in the church, we all must seek to get at least a little grasp of who this comforter is.

[9 : 11] I feel it is most important that we know something about this person of whom Christ is speaking here that he is going to send and has sent to be with his people.

In other words, the Holy Spirit. You will notice, you will have noticed in that reading we had from the second, from the epistle of first epistle of John, second chapter, that John there speaks of the last time and of seducers coming in seeking to seduce the believers away from their steadfastness in Christ and their steadfastness in the truth.

Well, you can rest assured of this that the one who sought to seduce the church then is no less inclined to seduce the church today. He has had 2,000 years of experience in his work and it may be that his methods are much less obvious in one sense today than they were then because he is more subtle and one place where we must guard against him is in our understanding of the different persons of the Godhead.

Now, over the last while, we have again and again resorted to emphasising the deity of Christ, the person of Christ, but I feel that we must also emphasise the deity of the Holy Spirit and seek to learn something about the Holy Spirit himself for our good and the good of the church and the glory of God.

Let us notice then together first of all who this comforter is. Who is this comforter? I will pray the Father and he shall give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever.

[10 : 58] is this comforter just an influence or as some would tell us today a personification of an influence?

This is a very important question one we ought all to ask. Indeed much depends on the answer we give to the question who is this comforter?

Our concept of God the Trinity above all of course the Holy Spirit himself will depend on how we answer this question who is he?

Is the Spirit a person? Now in our day when people talk of the Holy Spirit generally speaking it would seem that people do not recognize him as a person.

And again we might ask the question together with asking is he a person is he a divine person? Because if he is not a person he cannot be a divine person.

[12 : 24] and he is not a divine person then there is no Trinity. We may think that we're well versed in scripture and able to withstand the subtleties of the sects.

But unless we know our doctrine of the Holy Spirit we're not. I wonder how many of us when we're visited for example by Jehovah's Witnesses or by Mormons or any other sect can honestly argue with them biblically and particularly on this doctrine.

Because if we can then we can refute all their arguments. If we know this doctrine we can refute all their beliefs. who then is this person?

Well we must take our answer from the passage before us and its context. There's plenty other passages in scripture from which we might find an argument evidence rather to prove the personality of the Holy Spirit.

But it's always better to interpret scripture in the light of its context and indeed there is much said here about the Holy Spirit that ought to give us an understanding of him that will leave us not only strengthened but comforted and assured and strong.

[13 : 56] This is why we have the scripture. This is why we're here tonight at all. That by the scriptures we may be comforted we may be edified we may be up built in our faith.

And if we would only give ear to what God has to say in his word to us we would be much stronger than we are. Much more advanced in the faith than we are. Now from the passage before us we notice that he is a person.

That is clearly brought out for us there in scripture. You see Christ here speaks of another comforter. And that he speaks of course in the context of having spoken of himself.

And he's leaving them. He's speaking of himself who is after all a person. He has been their comforter. He is the comforter who has hitherto been present with them.

But he is going away. And he says that he will give them another comforter. Now surely when he's talking of his own person and in the context of that speaking of another comforter he is speaking of another person who's going to be with them.

[15 : 09] I wonder how many of us honestly think of a person being with us when we speak of the Holy Spirit's presence. And we're not inclined to think of an influence.

But we must take to heart that when we're talking of the Holy Spirit being with us, we're talking of a person being with us. He is obviously here speaking of another person who will meet the personal needs of these men and the personal needs of every true Christian in this world.

Again, Christ speaks of us as a person, not a thing. And you know, I'm not saying in this congregation but elsewhere I've heard people praying and praying for the blessing of the Holy Spirit and perhaps unwittingly speaking of him as a thing.

The Comforter, the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he says, he and not it shall teach you all things.

He shall teach you all things. Not it shall teach you all things but he shall teach you all things. Again, when he, the Spirit of Truth has come, he will guide you into all truth.

[16 : 48] He will do that. He, the person of the Holy Spirit. Our insight into the truth depends upon him. Are you ignorant of the truth of God?

Oh, you know your Bible historically. You read it every day, religiously. You know what's expected of you. And it may be that at times you'll be able to tell people, oh, I had my quiet time and I read my Bible at such and such a time.

Very good. But do you understand the truth? Oh, you say, I don't have the intellect. I don't have the learning of these people. I've never had theological training. Friends, all the theological training in the world will never give you and me an insight into the truth.

The most intelligent man on the face of this earth tonight does not have an insight into the truth of God. It is the Holy Spirit who gives that. He works on the intellect. Of course he does.

But the intellect of itself cannot understand these things. The natural man cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit of God. It's impossible for him to do. And our ignorance of the truth tonight I believe is not on account of the fact that we don't read our Bibles.

[18 : 02] It isn't on account of the fact that we don't have this version or that version. It isn't that we need another new version. We're being conned by these people. What we need is the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit. You remember Angus of the Ben as he was known. Unlearned, ignorant, a bit simple, both very simple.

And yet, in a day when there were giants in the Church of Christ in the north of Scotland, these giants of the pulpit went to that man so that he would interpret certain parts of Scripture to them.

Because they knew he was a man taught of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, taught of the Holy Spirit. But you will notice he is also spoken of here as abiding or dwelling.

Isn't it good to know tonight that he always dwells with his people? This is the promise given the disciples, the promise that has been accomplished at Pentecost.

[19 : 13] Once and for all he came and he dwells in the church. He is always in the church, he is always dwelling with us. You know how it is, you are living with someone in your own home and there is an intimacy there between you and the people who live in that home with you.

Something that is privately between you and them, you are sharing all things with them. Well that is but a faint reflection of the truth concerning Christ and his people.

He is always dwelling with us, living with us. Ah yes, even when we are in a backslidden state, we are offending him then. He is not communicating with us then just as it is true of a loved one that we may offend.

At times they may not perhaps express their anger in words or their displeasure rather in words but their silence speaks more than anything.

There is nothing more difficult because you have hurt them. Well this is how the Holy Spirit is hurt by us and we no longer have the communications of the Spirit to our souls, to our hearts, to our lives as once we did.

[20 : 18] But it is good to know that even then he still dwells with us. He's not going to leave us. Why? Because we're united to him forever, everlastingly. I will betroth you to myself forever, God said.

That is, I will marry you to myself forever. There's no divorce in regard to Christ and his people. We're united forever to him. Death itself will not sever this connection because it is eternal.

Now friends, a quality as some people call the Holy Spirit, an influence, cannot dwell in this way. Can it? Of course it cannot. You can only speak of a person dwelling who is a person.

You can't talk of a thing dwelling. And this is the terms Christ uses. So surely we can see the personality of the Spirit. And you'll notice he is one who testifies, teaches all things.

Oh, isn't that good? We are slow to learn. Slow to learn, my friends. But he teaches all things. He will bring to remembrance, show things to come, guide into all truth.

[21 : 31] You know how it is. You have read the scriptures again and again. And one day, quite surprisingly, suddenly the word comes to you.

You've forgotten you ever read it. And as it comes to you, you're given an understanding of that word that you never had before. Why is that?

Because the Spirit of God, God the Holy Spirit, brings to remembrance all things. He is doing his work.

The way people talk today, it's as if the church of Christ has changed. It hasn't. As if the work of grace had changed. It hasn't. Well, there's a lot of spurious religion around and Christianity around. There's not a lot that is named Christianity.

There's not Christianity at all. There's a lot of things called the work of the Spirit. There's not the work of the Spirit at all. But this work is always there and will be there to the end. You cannot expect anything else from the Spirit but what the scriptures tell us, tells us here, the Spirit will do.

[22 : 36] And he still does it. And he will do it to the end. So that, I hope by now, we do understand, realize, recognize, rather, that here, scripture is speaking of the Holy Spirit as a person.

But, secondly, you will notice, he is a divine person. He's not only a person, but a divine person. That is, he is the second person of the Godhead. In other words, he is God.

And if we admit the personality of the Spirit, first of all, there is no difficulty in at all in acknowledging his divinity, in acknowledging his Godhead.

He is the Spirit of Truth, we are told here. The Spirit of Truth, equal with the Father and the Son. Now, I think that is one of the most difficult truths for us to really take to heart.

That the Holy Spirit of whom we speak so glibly, whom we offend so easily, is God. When we're talking of him, we're talking of the one God, but three persons.

[23 : 48] Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is not different to God, he is God. As the Father is God, as Christ is God.

He is, they all are spiritual. God is Spirit. Remember, that was one of the things that Israel was taught at the very outset of their pilgrimage and the giving of the laws, I sought to emphasize this morning.

The fact that God is Spirit, he's not tangible, he's Spirit. The Father is essentially Spirit, the Son is essentially Spirit.

The Son has taken to him our nature. He has added that to himself, but that hasn't taken from his essence, which is Spirit. And so the Holy Spirit also in his essence is Spirit.

Spirit. He is the Spirit of Truth, not of error. Not of error. Remember how John, in writing that epistle that we read, the part of which we read together, is emphasizing this also, to beware of every Spirit that tells not the truth and that is not of the truth.

[25 : 03] Every Spirit that denies the deity of Christ is not of the truth. But the Holy Spirit always reveals Christ who is the truth. He will receive of mine and he will reveal, declare, open out that to you.

That is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He knows and reveals. He loves the truth. He is thus a most suitable comforter, isn't he?

Who knows how to comfort, how to direct. You and I try to comfort one another. The preacher, in his preaching, tries to comfort.

But we know that often, in trying to do so, we're only distressing people. Even with the truth, even while preaching the truth at times.

But this, we do know, that the Holy Spirit never does that. Oh, he rebukes, he corrects. But he never deliberately hurts. Because he is the comforter.

[26 : 15] That is his office. He is the one who stands near to comfort as only he can. But you'll notice next, that there are certain things said about him now.

It says that the world cannot receive him. he is the Holy Spirit. That's a strange statement, isn't it? What is meant by that?

Because after all, we were once of the world, those who are Christians. We have received him. And yet, the Bible here teaches that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit.

that is, the world cannot receive his testimony in the word. The world cannot receive them in their heart and their mind.

The world cannot yield to his influence. Some people are surprised when they go to them with the gospel, whether it is in personal testimony or in preaching or however, that they don't all immediately believe what he said.

[27 : 23] But you see, this is what the word of God tells us, that the world will not receive the Holy Spirit or the things of God. The world rejected Christ, remember.

The spirit of the world is still the same. That is, mankind, the world, mankind in their natural state, unchanged, unconverted, such as are under the power of error and not under the power of God, they will not receive the spirit of God, will not receive the truth of God, will not receive the gospel of God.

One says, well, why preach the gospel? Because we believe that in his own good time, in his own way, and in his appointed time, he will bless his word to those whom he's going to call out of the world.

In other words, it's not that a worldly man cannot become a spiritual man, or else there wouldn't be spiritual men. love error, but it is morally impossible for a man to love error at the same time as love God or the Holy Spirit.

It's not possible. That is totally. I'm not saying that the born again man, the Christian man and woman, does not find the world appealing to him because he is a Christian.

[28 : 55] The Christian man still finds that. But as far as total love for the world, and total love for Christ is concerned, you cannot have the two.

And you see, the person who is unregenerated loves the world. Loves the world and all that is in the world, that is his God. The Spirit of God was never welcomed by a worldly man before that man receives the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

A work that is a mystery to the best. No one can explain that work of regeneration. But in such time as a person is born again of the Spirit of God, the person has no time whatsoever for the things of God.

There are some people here tonight and they may feel, well really, I don't know where I stand. I find it so difficult to discern where I stand.

Why is that? I believe because many of us refuse to see the truth. On the one hand, some people refuse to see the truth insofar as their need of salvation is concerned. But there are others, I believe, who are saved.

[30 : 22] And they don't discern that. They don't see that. They don't understand it. They don't understand themselves. And we get into all sorts of difficulties so that we begin to think, well, there's absolutely no hope for me at all.

the world does not receive the spirit of God because it does not see him and does not know him.

But the person who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit does. Perhaps only faintly to begin with. Remember there was another who saw men as threes walking. They couldn't say saw men, but he had received so much of his sight.

And there are people like that in the church. They just see and just see and no more. And because they're not seeing clearly, perfectly, they say, well, there's no hope for me.

Friend, don't give up hope. Don't give up hope. You know that the spirit has spoken to you from time to time. What is it to see the spirit?

[31 : 33] It is to recognize him in his word. To recognize him in his work. And he says, neither does he know him. That is, the person who is in the world does not know the spirit.

He has no personal, that is, experience of the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. No experience of his power. Remember how God's word put it.

The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolish unto him, neither can he know him, because they are spiritually deserved.

So then, we see that the Holy Spirit is a person, is a divine person, and he is one whom the world cannot receive, does not receive, the world does not know. Don't be surprised if the world hates you because you're a Christian, it hated Christ before.

Don't be surprised if the world will not agree with you with what you have to say about Christ and his word, and particularly about the Holy Spirit, because it's all a nonsense to him. But let us notice how the spirit's presence with the disciples was to be secured.

[32 : 47] I will pay the Father, and he shall give you another comforter. There is one mediator between God and man, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessings come to us only as we are connected to Christ, only as they come to us through him. Blessings are given us only for his sake, only for the sake of Christ.

What about the blessings the world enjoy? Well, we can in one sense call them blessings, but the curse of God is upon them if they have not faith in Christ, as far as they are concerned. We receive them only in consequence of the finished work of Christ.

We receive them only in consequence of his intercession, and here he is verbally interceding, but there is a greater intercession. He interceded for the transgressors in his death on the cross.

Christ was about to leave the world. No, he has left the world. God the Father therefore sends another comforter, as a consequence, only as a consequence of his son having finished the work which the Father gave him to do.

[33 : 53] And on the ground of his finished work, asking the Father for certain things for us. It's wonderful to see this. I will pray the Father, verbally pray, but his verbal prayer is based on, is grounded upon his finished work.

He hasn't yet finished it, but he's about to finish it. Remember in his high priestly prayer uttered almost immediately after this, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Glorify thou me. Keep them that are in the world. So on. All based on what? The fact that he has finished the work. He is praying now, and the ground of his prayer is this, his own, what he is about to do.

He asks and it is done. Friends, let us plead the merits of Christ, and let us examine the prayers of Christ, and expect great things from God on account of what he has done.

The blessing of the Holy Spirit, because he asks in accordance with the Father's will. The Father cannot refuse, not just because it is in accordance with his will, but because of the finished work of Christ.

[34 : 57] He cannot refuse what Christ asked for. He cannot refuse to bless the church. He cannot refuse to bless you. He cannot refuse to comfort you. As if he would, as if he wanted to.

Of course, he doesn't want to, because I and the Father are one. They are united in their desire for blessing the church. Let us not live as paupers, my friends, as if we had nothing and had no right to anything that we seek after.

We have of ourselves no right, but we have the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the merits of his finished work. And let us plead with God to make us all the more conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit with us.

The comforter was to abide with them forever, to guide, to influence them, for as long as they lived. Ah, but you see, that was the disciples, yes, but they were representative of the church of Christ in every age.

Why is it we are so unconscious of the Spirit's presence with us? Is it that he is not present? Of course he is present. Why is it? It's because we are offending him. Why is it we are not seeing his work among us?

[36 : 08] It's because we are not waiting upon him. We think we can do things ourselves. If we live as Christians, my friends, we live in the Spirit.

If we walk as Christians, we walk in the Spirit. If we overcome sin, it is by him. Because greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

Never forget that. Never give in in prayer. Because we have the promise of Christ to his church, of the Comforter.

Remember who he is. He is God. Almighty. With us. In us. Working for us.

Not against us. May God bless our few thoughts on his word to us. Let us pray. Lord, we thank thee this night for thy word. We pray thee to bless it to us.

[37 : 17] We pray thee to be with us in this world in which we live. We pray that thy spirit's presence would be our portion, consciously our portion.

For we know there are many seeking to seduce us away from the truth and to bring us into bondage and legalism, coldness, hardness, materialism, worldliness.

O blessed be thy name that all of these put together are but nothing in comparison with what we have in Christ and the ministry of the Spirit.

We look to thee for blessing upon us. Unite us in prayer as we part one from another now and take away sin for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[38 : 27] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
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