

THE COMFORTER

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. To properly understand the N.T., to be able to handle aright the word of truth, it is imperative that one understand the work of the apostles of Christ.
2. But to understand the work of the apostles one must understand the work of the Holy Spirit through them.
3. Furthermore, it is immensely helpful, in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles, to see and understand, as well as appreciate, the Spirit's function as Comforter to the apostles.
4. This is our reason for studying this lesson entitled "The Comforter."

II. DISCUSSION

A. **FIRST, WE IDENTIFY THE COMFORTER IN THE FOLLOWING VERSES WHICH HAVE REFERENCE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE COMFORTER.**

1. Jno.14:15,16: "...I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter...even the Spirit of truth..."
2. Jno.14:25,26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit..."
3. Jno.15:26: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father..."
4. Jno.16:6,7: "...It is expedient for you (the apostles) that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."
5. Nearly the whole scope of the work of the Holy Spirit wrought through the apostles can be seen in the context of these four passages.
6. Take note of the fact that these passages and their context limit the work of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter to the apostles; it is a promise to them and to them alone; no one else is under consideration in these passages.
7. There is no authority for and no Scriptural justification to apply these verses to all Christians, or to any preachers of the world today.

8. The Spirit may be said to be a comforter to other Christians in an indirect sense (only as Comforter to them through that which he did through the apostles, or through the Spirit-inspired written word of God).
9. The apostles are the exclusive receivers of him in the sense he is promised in the four passages cited and now under consideration.

B. “COMFORTER,” WHICH IS FROM THE GREEK WORD *PARAKLETOS*, DEFINED WILL AID US IN UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE IN WHY JESUS SENT THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE THE COMFORTER TO THE APOSTLES.

1. In the original Greek Comforter is a compound word made up of *para*, “to the side of,” and *kaleo*, “to call or summon.”
2. Hence it literally means one who is called to the side of another. And, of course, for the purpose, or purposes, specified.
3. W.E. Vine says, It is “a verbal adjective, and suggests the capability or adaptability for giving aid. It was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defense, an advocate; then, generally, one who pleads another cause, an intercessor, advocate, as in 1Jno2:1, of the Lord Jesus. In the widest sense, *it signifies a succourer, comforter...*” Vine’s Dictionary of N.T. Words.
4. Any of four different words, Comforter, Counselor, Helper, or Advocate, may be used to render the original concept, namely, the Holy Spirit’s coming in beside the apostles to aid them in pleading their cause.
5. When the apostles preached the truth revealed to them by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit was also to come to their aid as, the use Vine’s expression, “the Counselor for the defense in confirming the word preached by miraculous demonstrations, Mk.16:19,20; Heb.2:1-4; 2Cor.12:12.
6. Compare this from Mt.10:16-20 during the Limited Commission, to see how it is to have the Holy Spirit acting in the capacity of counsel for the defense, or to aid.

C. NOW CONSIDER THE COMFORTER’S SPECIFIED WORK WITH AND THROUGH THE APOSTLES OF WHICH THERE ARE AT LEAST SEVEN WORKS ASSIGNED TO THE COMFORTER IN THE CONTEXT OF JNO.14_16-16:15.

1. There is the abiding Comforter.
 - a. The comforter was to abide with the apostles forever, Jno.14:15,16. Cf. Mt.28:18-20.
 - b. The Holy Spirit would never leave the apostles, nor would the world be able to take him from them. For when Jesus promised them the Comforter in Jno.14:16, he went on to say, as in Jno.14:17: “Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive (*or take*, as in take from or rob one of) because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”
 - c. While it is true that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit (that is, the power of the Holy Spirit) as the apostles did , or in any other sense, that is not what this is not what Jno.14:17 is teaching.
 - (1) The word “receive” here means to “take.”
 - (2) The original word translated “receive” in Jno.14:17 carries the idea of “receiving” when in the passive voice, and carries the idea of “taking” when in the active or middle voice. It is in the **active** voice in Jno.14:17 and means to “take.”
 - (3) The idea is this: The world could and did take away the apostles first Comforter, who was Jesus himself; they crucified him; then he arose from the dead, after which he ascended into heaven; but he would and did send them another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the world could not take away. He would abide with them forever, V.16.
 - (4) This shows that the work of the Spirit through the apostles was to be permanent -- it would not change with changing society nor be driven away by opposition.
 - (5) The Holy Spirit would be their abiding Comforter.
2. There is also the teaching Comforter.
 - a. The second work ascribed to the Comforter is the fact that he would teach the apostles all things and guide them into all truth, Jno.14:26; 16:13.
 - b. They, in turn were to teach the world, Mt.23:18-20; Mk. 16:14-16; Lk.24:44-48; Jno.20:21-23.

- c. Which, of course, they did, Col.1:3-6,21-23; Jude 3; Eph. 3:1-4; 1Cor.2:9-13.
3. There is also the *reminding Comforter*.
- a. Jno.14:26: "...he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to you remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
 - b. This promise is limited to the chosen apostles, whom Jesus had taught many things during his personal, earthly ministry.
 - c. Of the hundreds of things which Jesus had taught them in person, how were they to remember them and present them after his ascension; much less, remember and present them accurately.
 - d. Must they depend solely on their own ability to remember?
 - e. No! Absolutely not! Where they were inadequate in and of themselves, the Holy Spirit came to fill their needs and "bring all things to your remembrance...", says Jno.14:26.
 - f. Thus, he was the *reminding Comforter*.
4. There is the *witnessing Comforter*.
- a. Jno.15:26: "But when the Comforter is come...he shall testify of me." ASV: "he shall bear witness of me."
 - b. In addition to being an abiding, teaching, and reminding Comforter, the Holy Spirit was also sent to bear witness of Jesus.
 - (1) Witnesses of what things? That of Vv.29-31.
 - (2) The Apostles were to be witnesses of Jesus, Lk. 24:48.
 - (3) How did they witness? They, as eye witnesses of the risen Lord, proclaimed the word or preached Jesus and confirmed their message by miraculous demonstrations by means of the Holy Spirit.
 - (a) See Ac.5:32; Ac.14:3; Jno.3:2; Mk.16:19,20; Heb.2:1-4; 1Jno.5:6.
 - (4) Thus both the apostles and the Holy Spirit bore witness of Jesus – to bear witness means to "give evidence" – the facts in the case.
5. There is the *convincing Comforter*.

- a. Up to this point we have seen that the work of the Comforter was to be that of abiding, teaching, reminding, and witnessing.
- b. All of these functions had a vital role in the revealing and the delivering of the divine scheme of human redemption
- c. Each one shows some particular aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit as she worked through the apostles to make known the will of God to man.
- d. In addition to all of these, the Holy Spirit, as Comforter, had the function of reproof (or convicting, RSV) the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, Jno.16:7-11.
 - (1) To “reprove” (*elegcho*), as used here, means, according to both Vine and Thayer: “to convict; contextually, by conviction to bring to light, to expose; to find fault with, correct, admonish... contextually, to call to account, show one has faults.”
 - (2) To “convince” conveys the correct concept when applied to either sin, righteousness, or judgment.
- e. But how would, or how did, he convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
 - (1) He did it through the revelation of truth, by abiding with the apostles, by his teaching through them, and by bearing witness by means of miraculous works through the apostles bearing witness to the facts of the gospel – the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; plus the whole of the “doctrine of Christ.”
- f. His convincing of sin, Ac.2:1-38; 8:19-24; etc. etc.
- g. His convincing of righteousness; that is, the righteousness of God – the state or condition that is authorized by doing the will of God.
 - (1) Rom.1:14-17; 3:19-24; 10:1-4.
 - (2) 1Jno.3:7.
 - (3) Compare Ac.24:24,25.
- h. His convincing of judgment.
 - (1) The judgment is a fact that all men should face with reality, although very few actually do, Mt.7:13,14,21-23.
 - (a) Mt.25:31-46.
 - (b) Jno.5:27-29.

- (c) Ac.17:30,31.
 - (d) Rom.2:2-6,16.
 - (e) 2Cor.5:10.
 - (f) 2Th.1:6-10.
 - (g) Heb.9:27,28.
- (2) Now see Ac.24:25 as the case of Felix as a specific example of how the Holy Spirit convinces of judgment.
- (a) He had cause to tremble. Explain.
 - (b) In view of that, he was made to see how he ought to live (to be righteous) because it was God's will and because of the judgment he faced.
- (3) The fact of judgment for all men is based on man's accountability – the fact that he is a steward of what he possesses and what he is.
- (a) Psa.24:1; 50:10-12; Ezk.18:4.
6. There is the **guiding, revealing Comforter**.
- a. Jno.16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will **guide** you into all truth...whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."
 - (1) What is promised here is that the Spirit would guide, by revelation, the apostles into all truth – all of God's will and way to man for this age.
 - (2) And that he would show them things to come (KJV); ASV: "and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come" – or future things.
 - b. Scriptural evidence is abundant that this was done by these Spirit-empowered; Spirit-guided apostles.
7. Finally, there is the **glorifying Comforter**.
- a. The final work ascribed to the Comforter, in the context of Jno.14,15,16, where the word Comforter is used, his function is said to be that of **glorifying Christ**.
 - b. Jesus said in Jno.16:14,15: "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."
 - c. Since it is the case that all things that pertain to, or that the Father hath, pertain also to Christ, this promise, in its

totality, covers the whole of the scheme of human redemption.

- d. The Spirit would glorify Jesus Christ by taking all those things and showing (revealing) them to the apostles who would preach the risen and glorified Christ.

III. CONCLUSION

1. Thus we come to the end of our study of the Comforter and his work through the apostles of Jesus Christ.
2. Remember, as we concluded the study, that the Holy Spirit came or was sent to the apostles as their Comforter, in the absence of Christ, who has left to ascend to heaven.
3. That was to abide with them, to teach them, to bring all things to their remembrance, to testify (bear witness) of Christ through them, to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment through them, to guide them into all truth, to reveal to them the totality of God's will and way, and to glorify Christ through them.
4. One of the reasons this basic work of the Holy Spirit is so often misunderstood and misapplied is because of a misconception of what the Spirit of God was sent to do or to accomplish, and how he was to accomplish it; as a result, things are falsely ascribed to him that he was never given or sent to do; did not do, and does not do!
5. To apply these passages in Jno.14,15,16 to men today is to ignore the truth and scriptural function of the Holy Spirit!

(Credit to Howard Winters – from his book, “The Word of the Holy Spirit.”), pp., 33-69.