

The Comforter

Even as Christians, the full capacity of the Holy Spirit can be hard to grasp, and sometimes we miss the incredible connection with Jesus because we tend to think of the Holy Spirit solely as the power of God. But it is so much more—in ways that bring us the greatest strength and blessings. “But *when* the Comforter [parakletos] *comes, even* the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, that one shall teach you all things, and shall bring to your remembrance everything that I have told you” (John 14:26).

Only Jesus called the Holy Spirit a *comforter* (four times in John 14, 15, and 16). Look at the meanings of the Greek word Jesus used for the Holy Spirit:

- 1) One called near to give help
- 2) An intercessor (one who entreats on behalf of another)
- 3) A comforter

Now compare this to Paul’s description of the Holy Spirit: “Now in the same way also, the Spirit is conjointly helping our weaknesses because we do not fully understand what we should pray for, according as it is necessary, **but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us** with groanings that cannot be expressed *by us*” (Rom. 8:26).

Paul says the Holy Spirit is an intercessor. So why is it called a *comforter* in John 14:26? And why did Jesus use the word *comforter* in the three chapters of John? There is a point being made here about the Holy Spirit that is hidden in the English translation.

The Greek word for *intercession* is *huperentugchano*. Like many such words, it is a concatenation of two primitive Greek words: *huper* and *entugchano*. *Huper* means “superior to” or “more than,” and *entugchano* means “confer with” or “to entreat.” Together they mean much more than the English word *intercession*, which is generally regarded in more of a legal and uncompassionate sense. Consider the four possible meanings when these two Greek words are combined:

- 1) Superior conferring
- 2) Superior entreating
- 3) More than conferring
- 4) More than entreating

From this there is a definite sense that whatever the Holy Spirit is doing is much more than simply conferring or entreating. Sadly, the English word “intercession” is a rather stoic and a weak description of what the Holy Spirit is doing. When a person intercedes, they are intervening on behalf of another; but there is no indicated depth of involvement. On the other hand, *entreat* expresses an emotional connection; *entreat* means to ask EARNESTLY or ANXIOUSLY on behalf of someone. So how can the Holy Spirit’s function be “more than entreating”?

Notice the next scripture: “And **the one Who searches the hearts** comprehends what **the strivings of the Spirit** are because it makes intercession for *the* saints according to *the will of God*” (Rom. 8:27). The Holy Spirit does two things: it conveys *to* us the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:16) and Jesus is *searching* us by means of the Holy Spirit.

Most importantly, He is searching our *hearts*. The Holy Spirit not only conveys to us the mind of Christ, but through it Jesus knows the innermost parts of our hearts. That helps explain why Paul said what he did in the next verse: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

Isaiah 53:5 says that Jesus was “wounded for our transgressions.” The Hebrew meaning

of “wounded” is to *bear*. When He carried the sins of the world just before His death, it was more than bearing a heavy burden. He fully experienced the terrible pain and unbearable suffering that sin produces, and as a result *knows* our infirmities (Heb. 4:15) in ways not possible for any man or woman.

This is why Jesus, in His Passover sermon in John 14-16, referred to the Holy Spirit as the “comforter.” Jesus knew He was going to experience human suffering like no man ever endured; but He did it willingly SO THAT HE MIGHT BE AN INTERCESSOR FOR US WHEN WE SUFFER. Likewise, the Holy Spirit makes *huperentugchano*—which is not just making intercession, but something much more, even more than entreating. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus *comforts* us as one who truly knows our pain and suffering—because He not only carried the sins of the world but has an intimate understanding of grief (Isa. 53:3). As our Savior, He continuously looks deep into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. As a man, He wept out of love and compassion when He saw Mary weeping beside the grave of Lazarus. Imagine the depths of His *agape* and compassion now that He is resurrected and deeply knows the sorrow, agony, misery, torment, and affliction that we bear.

This may be what inspired Paul to write: “So then, I beseech *you* not to faint at my tribulations for you, which are *working for* your glory. For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, **to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; and that being rooted and grounded in love, you may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge**; so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. **Now to Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us**, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, *even* into the ages of eternity. Amen” (Eph. 3:13-21).

Pentecost is the day the Holy Spirit was given. But the Spirit is much more than the power of God, because it connects us to Jesus. With it, Jesus *knows* the depth of our sorrows and we know His love for us. When trials come, know that the tears in your heart are shed in heaven for Christ to see. Out of His mercy and love, He gives us strength and *comforts* us with an *agape* that surpasses all knowledge. Living with someone allows each to come to know the other sincerely and deeply—and Jesus *dwells* in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. He will not let us faint or suffer alone. Believe in these promises in times of trials, and let our Friend, the most high King and Savior, help with the burdens. He is there for us always, never fainting, never forgetting, and never leaving us.