# The Comfort of the Holy Spirit

**An Opening Prayer:**

*Lord our God we pray against that subtle onslaught by the enemy of our lives whereby he uses the abundance and richness of Your truth to banish from our minds some truth already learned. Grant us freshness and alertness and the opening of our minds so that we might once again have an understanding of Your Word and see yet more of what You have to give to us.*

Acts 9:31: ***"Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit. It grew in numbers living in the fear of the Lord."***

This verse is good background for some thoughts about the Holy Spirit from the teaching of Jesus.

**The Comfort of the Holy Spirit**

Comfort is such a splendid word! It is a great word for the people of God in the days in which we live. It speaks to us of:

- Soothing in respect of our worries
- Strengthening in respect of our weaknesses
- Reassurance in respect of our fears

It speaks to us of the **competence** and the **calmness** and the **warmth** of the Holy Spirit. It seems to me that this is the major testimony of Scripture to the Spirit of God.

**He is the Spirit who brings comfort!**

He brings into our lives all the strength of God in all its competence and all its calmness as well as all its warmth.

Have you ever collected together all the titles in the New Testament given to the Holy Spirit?

1. **There are titles that declare His Divine personality.**

   He is spoken of as the **Holy** Spirit. In the Bible the chief characteristic of God in His own nature is **Holiness**. He is the **Spirit of Holiness**. He is the **Spirit of Glory**.

2. **There are titles that speak of His relationship with the other persons in the Holy Trinity**.

   He is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Him who raised up Christ from the dead. He is the Spirit of the Living God – the Spirit of Jesus – the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of His (God's) Son.

3. **There are titles that speak of His relationship with the believer.**

   He is the Comforter. He is the Spirit of Life. He is the Spirit of Adoption.

4. **There are titles that speak of His relationship with the Word of God.**

   He is the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Promise.

**Do you feel the comfort of the Holy Spirit?**

Do you **feel** that the major truth concerning this person of the Godhead is:

- ✓ The calmness of His strength
- ✓ The sufficiency of His resources
- ✓ The warmth of His companionship with us

Are you receiving from Him all the benefits and blessings of the God-alongside? Are you thrilled with the fellowship with the Father and the Son that is made real to us by the Holy Spirit?

Do you know him as the **Comforter**, the **Counsellor** and the **Companion**?

Are you experiencing this **Spirit who brings life** and this Spirit who, as the Spirit of Adoption, knits us into the family of God?

Do you know that in every circumstance He is alongside us to declare to us the truth of God and make real to us the promises of God?

**This is the comfort of the Holy Spirit!**

Now to **unwrap** this thought of the comfort of the Holy Spirit and to bring it down from those great heights we've see as we've looked at the titles of the Spirit of God. We are going to look at the teaching of Jesus Himself in John's Gospel chapters 13 to 16.

John 16:1 ***"These things I have spoken to you*** (in order that – so that). ***You may be kept from*** (or to guard you against) ***the breakdown of your faith*** (or that you may not be made to stumble).***"***

KJ: ***"These things have I spoken to you that you should not be offended."***

RSV: ***"I have said all this to keep you from falling away."***

NIV: ***"All this I have told you so that you will not go astray."***

Philipps: *"**I have told you this now so that your faith in Me may not be shaken."***

LB: ***"I have told you these things so that you won't be staggered*** (by all that lies ahead)***."***

NEB: ***"I have told you all of this to guard you against the breakdown of your faith."***

So all the truths the Lord Jesus teaches us in these four chapters are to **guard us** – to protect us from staggering!

Several lines of truth come under the heading: **Truths that safeguard the believer**. These include:

- The practice of prayer
- The relationships between the three persons of the Trinity
- The supreme exultation of Jesus Himself to the highest throne
- The teaching concerning the Holy Spirit

Jesus teaches us about the Holy Spirit because it is **a safe-guarding truth**. It will guard us against the breakdown of our faith:

- It will guard you against breakdown.
- It will hold you against the risk of stumbling and falling over.
- It will keep you in the challenges – in the threats – in the tensions and pressures of the world in which you live.

***"These things I have spoken to you, to guard you against the breakdown of your faith."***

**Jesus' teaching concerning the Holy Spirit:** John 14:15-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14

This is marvellous! It is a great privilege to hear one person of the Trinity speak about another!

I would like to share three things:

**1. A fact to believe** – John 14:15

What does this ancient and lovely title '**Comforter'** mean to you? Some versions use the word **Counsellor** or **Helper**. Some use the word **Advocate**. The word is **'Paraclete'** the essence of this is **Companion**. He is the one called alongside. This suggests He is the one **we** can call alongside. Of course this is true, but this is not the truth Jesus is teaching here!

Here is a truth beyond our call – beyond our initiative! The Spirit of God has been instructed by the Father and the Son to take His position alongside us. He is the Paraclete. The other two members of the Trinity have appointed Him to fulfill the office of Companion-God to the Christian believer (see John 14:15, 16 and 26).

When we speak of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, the Helper, the Paraclete and the Companion who is called alongside, we are speaking fundamentally of a transaction that has taken place in heaven. At the appeal of the Son, the Father has sent, in the Son's name, One who stands alongside the Christian believer.

Now this is very comforting. The fact that He has been called upon by the eternal God to take up His stand alongside us is far and away more important than that **we** should call Him to come.

Sometimes, in my weakness, I can't call! Does that mean He's not there? Oh no, He's **always my Companion**, because He has been sent.

This means He is the Spirit – my Companion – my Mentor. This is all I could hope for in a mentor!

*"A mentor, in the Biblical sense, establishes a close relationship with a protégé and, on that basis, through fellowship, modelling, advice, encouragement, correction, practical assistance and prayer support, influences his understudy to gain a deeper comprehension of divine truth, lead a godlier life and render more effective service to God."* [Mentoring for Mission]

He is my mentor – not because I have sought Him – not because I have asked Him and not because I have appealed. It is because, in God's eternal purposes, it has been determined that I should be accompanied whenever, wherever and however by the One whom God the Father and God the Son have called to be alongside me as my Companion.

How can we unwrap this truth so we can enjoy the warmth of it? It is exciting and uplifting to our hearts and minds to know that by the will of God the Holy Spirit is forever the Companion of the believer. This is so important for our lives that we must enter effectively and sensibly into the comfort of this truth. Listen to the words of the Son of God:

***"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments, and I will ask the Father and He will give you another one – the Companion God."***

The secret of the enjoyment of the comfort of the Holy Spirit is **emotional and moral involvement with Jesus**. If we love Him and keep His commandments, then we have the Son of God's own word for it! He says the Companion God will be alongside us always!

Obedience is a proof of love. It is a proof of our emotional and moral involvement with Jesus. Look in the New Testament. All the greatest passages about the Spirit of God are the ones that emphasize commitment to the Son of God.

**The Lord Jesus is the key and central factor** to our enjoyment – practically and consciously – of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives that the Spirit God gives to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:32) Where the Holy Spirit sees moral commitment to the Lord Jesus in the life of a believer and that moral commitment springs out of a life of deep love for the Lord Jesus, there He is as the Companion of the believer. **The Holy Spirit as our Companion is a fact to believe and count on.**

**2. A truth to heed – the Spirit to obey** – John 14:26

Jesus teaches us that this Companion God is present with us as **teacher**.

***"But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit … He will teach you all things."***

John 16:13: ***"But when the Spirit of Truth comes He will guide you into all truth; For He will not speak on His own initiative, but what He hears, He will speak and He will disclose to you what is to come."***

**He will speak – He will teach – He will guide us into all the truth.**

**How does the Holy Spirit, exercise His ministry of teaching?**

It must be made very clear to us that we must be safeguarded from our own whims and fancies. We are ignorant. It isn't safe to follow our own best impulses, our best impressions, even our best scholarship and say, "The Holy Spirit said…". No! The Holy Spirit is a **teaching Spirit.**

Please notice that in 16:13 the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is related directly to what Jesus did: ***"He will disclose to you the things that are to come"***.

In the Gospel of John and from the mouth of Jesus, ***"The things that are now to come"*** refers to the **death, resurrection and ascension** of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is not a blanket promise that the Holy Spirit would open up the future to us. Eschatology has a place, but that it is not what is being referred to here.

No, the Holy Spirit will open to the believer the specific truths about all that Jesus accomplished in His death, resurrection and ascension. These are ***"the coming things"***, by which He made us a way home to the Father. This is clearly implied in John 14:26:

***"He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."***

The teaching function of the Holy Spirit is related to the words of Jesus. This is not ethereal, intuitive thoughts coming to a believer! In the first instance, it was a promise to the apostles that they would remember by the influence of the Spirit of God all that Jesus had taught them.

In John 14:24 the Father has a Word to speak to the world. That Word is mediated to the world by the Son – a Divine Word from God the Father through the Son to the world. Now Jesus says that the teaching Spirit will bring to your remembrance all that He has said. He will bring home to your hearts all that the Father spoke in heaven. What is that Word? It is the Bible – or specifically the New Testament. That Word was written down by the apostolic band and is now our New Testament – taught by the Holy Spirit – first in the four Gospels and then in the explanatory writings of the Epistles and the visionary writings of the Revelation. It is the whole mind of God made plain by the Holy Spirit who first inspired the writers of the Bible.

So our great Companion God teaches us from the Word – our open Bibles. This is the truth to heed. He makes it plain to us.

**How then will we unwrap this truth?**

**How can we begin to experience the Comfort of the Holy Spirit in His teaching ministry?**

As we begin to pour devoutly over the pages of Scripture, we begin to sense that none other than the Spirit of God has come to stand alongside us. He is opening up the Word to us, warming our hearts, enlarging our minds, feeding our spirits, strengthening our wills, leading us in all the perplexing decisions we have to make and giving us clarity of vision.

**We need to be People of the Book!**

**3. A function to imitate – the Spirit copied**

Here is another strand in the teaching of Jesus on the Holy Spirit.

John 15:26 – **He is the witnessing Spirit**.

His function in coming from heaven to be alongside us is **to bear witness**.

John 16:8-11 – **He is a testifying Spirit**.

His word to the world is a word about **sin**, about **righteousness** and about **judgement**.

But above all, it is a Christ-centred Word. When the Holy Spirit speaks to the world about sin:

- He emphasizes that the root of sin and the greatest sin is not to believe in Jesus.
- He sets forth Jesus as the object of personal faith.
- He invites individual men and women to place their faith in Jesus.
- He warns them that the alternative to believing in Jesus is to remain in sin.
- He supports this call to personal faith by His testimony that Jesus is all righteousness.
- He supports this claim by reminding us that Jesus has gone back to the Father and we see Him no more.

That is to say that He finished on earth the work that the Father gave Him to do. His reception, His position and His permanence at His Father's right hand is living proof that His work has been accepted before God. **It is a finished work!**

Jesus has been received back into heaven as the **All-righteous One.** He has completed all the Father required Him to do. So the Holy Spirit testifies to the finished work of Christ.

It is safe to believe in Jesus because He is the All-righteous One. He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Arbiter of our final destiny. There is a picture of two princes locked together in single combat. One is The Prince of Glory – our Lord Jesus Christ. The other is the Prince of this world. On the Cross they fought it out! By His death and resurrection Jesus overthrew the Prince of Darkness and demonstrated that He was the Victorious Son of God possessing the keys of death and Hades. Now the Holy Spirit comes to bear testimony to all this before the world. He is the testifying Spirit.

**Now, how can we unwrap the comfort of the Holy Spirit and feel His warmth?**

15:26: ***"The Holy Spirit will bear witness of Me***

15:27: ***and you also will bear witness***

16:7-8: ***and when He comes to you … He will convict …."***

The Holy Spirit comes to bear His witness **through us** to the world. When we give ourselves to the work of **testimony** and **witness.** We should give testimony of Jesus as:

- The only object of personal faith
- The finisher of the work of salvation
- The arbiter of eternal destiny

Then we will know without a shadow of doubt the surrounding warmth and comfort of the Holy Spirit because we are engaged **with Him** in a work of co-partnership.

He indwells us and accompanies us in bearing that very same testimony. It is here that we experience most deeply His calmness, competency and warmth!

The comfort of the Holy Spirit! He is our Companion God!

May we unwrap and feel about us moment by moment that comfort, that warmth and that strength of the **reality of God in our lives**.

How should we do this?

- By our emotional and moral involvement with Jesus
- By reverent attention to the Word of God
- By our testimony to an unsaved world

According to Jesus, that is how we will experience vividly, warmly and strongly the presence of the Spirit of God from day-to-day and He will guide us against the breakdown of our faith.

There is a once-for-all in**coming** of the Holy Spirit as our Companion. But there isn't a once-for-all in**filling**. At conversion we receive **all of Him**. But this doesn't mean He has **all of us**!

Infilling is an act of faith as we surrender and yield ourselves to Him. But there can be no filling that isn't accompanied by emptying. The command to be full of the Holy Spirit is universal. We all need to be full. The context is **relationship**, child-parent, husband-wife, employer-employee. It implies **all continuing relationships**.

You need His fullness for authority in service.

You need His fullness to make you Christ-like.

Let the Holy Spirit take possession of your whole being and He will make you like Jesus.

**What are the conditions?**

- **Emptiness** – a deep dissatisfaction with all we have ever been – a confession and renunciation of all in our lives that we have kept in **our** hands and under **our own** control. We must confess and renounce everything where self rules instead of Jesus.
- **Faith** – the ceaseless flow of His life is dependent on the ceaseless reception of a simple faith. He asks for this faith when we feel nothing and see nothing – when you feel dry and barren but you still believe His Word.
- **Obedience** – keep on practicing 'no' to self all the time. Disobedience leads to a sudden loss of 'anointing'. The only solution when this happens is to go back to step one. Keep on removing 'every hindrance' as you grow conscious of each one. We are like onions. There are many layers of sinfulness that need to be peeled off!

**A Closing Prayer:**

*Gracious Lord, write this word on our hearts. We long for a more vivid sense of Your presence, a more special sense of Your care. We not only long for these things, we need them so badly if we are to face the trials of this age in such a way as to see the breakthroughs we long for. Comfort us with the fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Help us to continually empty ourselves. Help us to live in faith in Your presence as our Companion and to draw on You. Help us to live in obedience.*