

The Help That Holds Us All Together John 15:18-20, 26-27; 16:1-7

Introduction

- Pentecost: Harvest Festival / Ten Commandments.
- 10 days prior, Jesus ascended into heaven.
- On Pentecost he sent his Spirit down to earth.
- He sent the Spirit to fulfil a promise made on the night of his betrayal – the day before his crucifixion.

Body

- You see, Jesus was about to enter his supreme crisis.
 - In a few hours he would be betrayed, arrested, tried, convicted, beaten, humiliated, crucified.
- He knew that his disciples would experience the same type of treatment, so he warned them of it in advance.
 - Jn 15:18-20, 16:1-2.
- It turned out just as Jesus predicted. The disciples were hated, persecuted, martyred, & put to death.
 - All of the Apostles, except John, were martyred.
 - Acts tells what happened to the early church. Arrests, persecution, & martyrdom are written on nearly every other page.
 - Paul's experience was typical. He describes it in 2 Cor. 11:24-25; tradition says he was beheaded by Nero.
 - Things haven't changed much.
 - We've witnessed numerous atrocities perpetrated against Christian this year: 21 Copts beheaded in Libya; 28 Ethiopians similarly slaughtered; 148 killed by al Shabab in Kenya; 70 Nigerians killed in recent weeks.
 - According to Open Doors USA, Christian persecution reached historic levels in 2014, with approximately 100 million Christians around the world facing possible dire consequences for merely practicing their religion; 2015 is no better – probably worse.
 - 322 Christians are killed/month; 214 churches/properties destroyed/month; 772 other forms of violence/month. Christianity is disappearing from Middle East.
- Yes, Jesus was about to enter his supreme crisis. He knew his disciples would experience the same treatment. Sandwiched in the midst of his prediction of persecution, he promised to send them a Helper. Jn. 15:26.
 - The Holy Spirit is called the Advocate. Advocate comes from "parakletos" which is variously translated advocate, counselor, comforter, helper.

- Holy Spirit was the help that held the early Christians together in the face of tremendous trial.
- How did the spirit help them?
 - He didn't shield them from or take them out of crisis.
 - He stood beside them to help them through crisis.
 - He did this by testifying about Jesus: reminding the disciples of Jesus' life, teaching, example, death, resurrection, ascension, presence, & intercession.
 - The Holy Spirit reminded them that it is better to have Jesus and lose the world than gain the world and lose Christ! Remembering this, they found the strength to stand firm.
- The Holy Spirit is the Help who holds us together too.
 - It strikes me that most of us will never face the type of persecution experienced by many Christians past & present but all of us will face crises of various sorts that would undo us without the Spirit's help.
 - I want to speak of two types of crisis where the Spirit can help us: troubles and temptations.
- The Holy Spirit helps us through our troubles.
 - All of us have troubles; troubles come in many different forms. Physical troubles (sickness or death); relational troubles (with spouse or children); emotional troubles (anxiety or depression); economic troubles (unemployment, underemployment, unhappy employment).
 - Spirit helps us through our troubles by testifying to, or reminding us of, Jesus.
 - He tells us that Jesus faced troubles far greater than our own. He tells us that Jesus knows our troubles even now. He tells us that Jesus sympathizes with us in our weakness and will never leave us nor forsake us but will always see us through. He tells us that Jesus is praying for us in heaven and rallying all of heaven's aid.
 - He reminds us of Heb. 2:18 & 4:15-16.
 - Are you in trouble? The Spirit is the Help who holds you together when you feel like your life is falling apart!
- The Holy Spirit helps us through temptation.
 - All of us are tempted; sometimes many times during the day. Most of the time we refuse temptation and choose to do the will of God.
 - But sometimes we are sorely tempted to do wrong. Sin's attraction is powerful and we feel as if we will give way.
 - The Spirit helps us through temptation by reminding us of Jesus. He reminds us of his sinless life; his holy teaching; his sacrificial death for our sin; his resurrection and ascension into heaven where he watches our

every action – both good and evil – and his intercession where he prays for us that we would shun evil and do right. Reminded of this, we find strength to triumph over temptation.

- Are you tempted? The Spirit gives you strength to resist by reminding you of Jesus.
- And what if your faith gives way in trouble or you surrender to temptation? The Spirit is your helper even then. He'll give you strength to rise and try again.
 - All of us have faltered, failed, fallen. Perhaps you're in that state even now. The Holy Spirit will help you rise and try again by reminding you of Jesus.
 - He'll remind you that Jesus knew you would falter, fail, fall, and died for you nonetheless. He loves you and is even now praying for your restoration and holding out a hand to raise you up again.

Conclusion

- On the edge of a great crisis, both for himself and for his disciples, Jesus promised to send a Helper to see them through it all. The Holy Spirit is that Helper.
- He saw the disciples through their crisis, and every disciple since, by reminding them of Jesus – all that he is, all that he's done, all that he does. He reminds us that it's better to lose the world and gain Jesus than gain the world and lose Christ. It's a great help!