

AFRAID TO BE ALONE

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I heard this story about a little girl whose family were planning to move—lots of families are on the move. On an average, families don't stay in one place very long. Well, this little girl kept hearing Mommy and Daddy and all her older brothers and sisters saying, "We're going to move! We're packing up everything, all the furniture, all the toys, all the dishes, and we're moving to another city far away."

The little girl listened to all this and kept wondering every day. Finally one day she asked, "When you all move away, what's going to happen to me all alone?" No one had thought to tell her that when the family moved away, they would take her along too! She was afraid of being left alone.

Everyone is afraid to be left alone. Children hear about people getting sick and dying, or getting killed in accidents, or murdered, and they worry, "What will happen to me if my parents die?" Even grownups worry about being left alone.

The Son of God once came to this world as a man and lived among us for over thirty-three years; those who knew Him loved Him, for He had become the center of their lives just as this little girl's family was the center of her life. And when Jesus talked about going away, they felt sad and lonely. But He said to them, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18).

When He said that, He was not talking about His coming back in the clouds of heaven, which we call

the Second Coming. That's called the blessed hope, but if that is our only hope, that means we are lonely here now. No, Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three persons, but they are one God; and you and I are closer to Jesus today through the Holy Spirit than the disciples were over 2000 years ago. When Jesus went away, He assured His disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). If you know this Good News, you will know that you will never be lonely.

Jesus has not left us alone. He Himself is with us by the Holy Spirit. But we ask the question: Why didn't God make a video of Jesus so we could play it and watch it? Wouldn't that help us feel like Jesus is near to us? Wouldn't that make it easier for us not to feel alone?

Many people for thousands of years have thought so, and that is why they have made images. A video of Jesus and an image of Jesus are really the same thing—just a difference in the sophistication of the technology. Those who feel they must have an image of Jesus or of the Virgin Mary or of Peter or someone else, are using it, or reverencing it, as a substitute for the real thing. Thus it actually becomes a hindrance to experiencing a genuine nearness. It is idolatry; and that is the sin of paganism.

Jesus said to the woman at Samaria, in John 4:23, 24: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” That does away with all images or physical attempts to make Jesus seem near. You will be free to enjoy the nearness of Christ when you believe His word. It is so, not because you feel it or you see it or you handle it, but because He says it.

The Pope of Rome claims to be the Vicar of Christ, His representative on earth, taking His place now that Christ has ascended to heaven. If that were true, it would be extremely bad news for everyone, for the Pope can do nothing to help you and me, so far as salvation is concerned. He is far away!

Jesus said that His true Vicar on earth is the Holy Spirit. That is tremendously Good News, because He can help you and me even more than Jesus could if He were here in person. In fact, He is called the Spirit of Christ. He is Christ’s Representative, divested of physical limitations, but acting in His stead.

The Bible teaches the worship of one God because the three Persons of the Godhead are one. That is why Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, He comes, not personally as when He returns in the clouds of heaven, but in the Spirit.

As Jesus is closer to us than popular teaching allows, so the Holy Spirit is closer to us than we have thought. He is as much a Friend as Jesus is. He is on our side, trying to get us ready to enter heaven, not trying to keep us out.

To understand what He is doing is to perceive a deeper dimension of the gospel as glorious “good news.”

The Holy Spirit—The Vicar of Christ

1. How did Jesus introduce us to the coming of the Holy Spirit? What is the meaning of the name which He gave Him? John 14:16-18, 26.

(a) Verse 16: He is “another *parakletos*,” that is, a Replacement for Himself. He is sent “in My name” as My Vicar, says Jesus.

(b) The name Comforter is from the Greek word which means “the one who is called to come and sit down beside you forever” (*para*, from which comes our word parallel—two railroad tracks are parallel, and they always stay together; and *kletos*, the One called).

(c) He will never leave us, although we can grieve Him and drive Him off.

(d) As Christ is the truth (John 14:6), so the Comforter is the Spirit of truth. When we reject truth, we grieve Him away.

(e) “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” verse 18: We are closer to Christ today by the Spirit than the Twelve were 2000 years ago when they walked and talked with Him personally.

(f) “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” verse 26: He is a Master Teacher and Stimulator of our memory.

There are reports in the media lately about the tragic inroads of Alzheimer’s disease, how a significant percentage of Baby Boomers now enjoying full possession of their mental faculties will

contract Alzheimer's during the next few decades, and lose them.

Then I looked again: Jesus promised that His Holy Spirit will reactivate our memories, obviously working to preserve the mental apparatus that makes memory function. This has to be an anti-Alzheimer's ministry, or the promise means nothing. But wait: it's not an encouragement to present-day mental laziness.

Reports in recent news magazines emphasize the hope that people who keep exercising their mental faculties are less likely to contract Alzheimer's; and what Jesus says seems to be in agreement. "The Holy Spirit . . . shall teach you all things . . . whatsoever [Christ has] said unto you."

That's the big *if*, the condition for the fulfillment of this blessed promise. It means daily learning in the school of Christ, sitting at His feet to actually gain some new knowledge, it means daily spiritual growth in the truths of the Bible, it means a humble heart always ready to learn from even "the humblest of God's servants" (according to one thoughtful writer), a sense of contrition, a definite "hunger and thirst after righteousness," it means a conscious choice to abandon our popular claim to be "rich and increased with goods, in need of nothing." It means a sensing the reality of one's being "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." It means soaking up "the knowledge of the truth" like a sponge. It means being mentally honest, transcending a vague "honesty of heart" that is satisfied with merely understanding a few

cut-and-dried "doctrines" that you have rehashed dozens of times.

The promise of Jesus seems clear: if we will "learn" the "all things" He has tried to teach us, then the Holy Spirit will bring them all "to our remembrance." When old age comes over you, you may forget your grandchildren's names, but you won't forget the "third angel's message in verity" which He has taught you to love, or its good news that you can share with your grandchildren.

2. Why did Jesus have to go away personally? How does the Holy Spirit give evidence of His love for us? John 16:7-11.

"It is expedient for you 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" verse 7: If Jesus had remained here personally or physically, He would have been our Pope (I speak reverently). But you could not have a visit with Him except by going through His secretaries and waiting months or years for a few precious minutes with Him. Many of earth's billions could never know Him.

But through the Holy Spirit each of us has unlimited access to Christ as though we were the only human being on earth. The Holy Spirit is God the Spirit, Christ the Spirit, everywhere at once. He has six billion people to care for, but He is infinite. Thus he gives full attention to each of us. Stand in the bright sunshine; you couldn't get more of it if you were the only person in the world.

"He will reprove the world of sin" verse 8: He proves His love for us by doing His first work—convicting us of sin. Pain is unpleasant to

experience, but it is a blessing. The sense of pain protects the body from being destroyed. The conviction of sin is also painful, but it is as important to yield to His conviction as it is to have a cancerous body member surgically removed or healed.

“Of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more” verse 9, 10: If Jesus were here personally, we would see our sins in the light of His perfect righteousness, as Peter cried out, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). In His absence, the Holy Spirit brings the same conviction that came to Peter. This has to be a supernatural work, for it is never natural for us to see how sinful we really are.

“Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” verse 11. But not all His work is painful. As we respond to His conviction to put the sin away, He brings us the joyous conviction that Satan is defeated and condemned, “judged,” “cast out” (John 12:31).

3. “He will guide you into all truth” (verse 13). Now ponder your privilege as the receiver of all this priceless blessing.

The only reason the church is divided and confused by contrary winds of doctrine is that the Holy Spirit has too often been grieved away. If He were welcomed He would guide us in unity into “all truth,” and the great gospel commission would soon be finished (Ephesians 4:3-6, 12-15). God’s last day gospel message was a part of the fulfillment of that promise of Jesus.

The Former and the Latter Rain of the Holy Spirit

4. Please get clearly in mind the difference between the former (or early) rain, and the latter rain. (Read Jeremiah 5:24; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23, 24, 2-32; Acts 2:4, 16-21; James 5:7, 8.)

The great gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the former or early rain. For nearly two thousand years, that gift has been a powerful blessing. But in Palestinian Biblical agriculture, the early rains were not sufficient to bring the grain to maturity and produce a harvest. There must come a latter rain. So with the work of the Holy Spirit. There must be a final outpouring that prepares God’s “grain” for the harvest. The harvest is the end of the world and the coming of the Lord. (See Matthew 13:39; Revelation 14:14, 15; *Early Writings*, p. 71, 86, 271.)

The Holy Spirit’s work will not be the same *in the last days* that it has been in the past 6000 years. There are several reasons:

1. The Spirit Himself of course will be the same through all ages; but it will be *His manifestation* that will be different. And we need to understand how.

2. It will be different even than it was at Pentecost two millennia ago. He manifested Himself then in the “*early rain*” outpouring; in the last days He will manifest Himself in the “*latter rain*” outpouring. There is great difference.

3. His manifestation in the “early rain” was a gift that prepared those who believed in Jesus to die “in Christ” and to come up in the first resurrection.

4. A preparation to die “in Christ” required that the believer overcome *all known sin*.

5. The “latter rain” outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a gift that prepares those who believe in Jesus to “overcome [all sin, even unknown] even as [Christ] overcame and sat down with [His] Father on His throne” (Rev 3:20).

6. The promise to those who “overcome” in the last of the seven churches of history is a promise to sit with Christ on His throne, that is, to share with Him executive authority in *concluding* the “great controversy with Satan,” not merely *extenuating* it for centuries more.

7. Thus the “latter rain” outpouring of the Holy Spirit is not merely to enable those who believe in Jesus to overcome all *known* sin, but to overcome all *unknown* sin as well. Many of God’s dear people in all past ages have died with *unknown* sin still in them; for example, consider John and Charles Wesley. They were dear men living up to all the light they had at the time, but they died as devout Sunday-keepers, not keeping holy the Sabbath day. Their level of faith was sufficient for their time but would not be sufficient for the test at the close of probation. God gave them the evidence of His acceptance and we can see it in their lives and their work.

8. Now today as we face the generation in which probation is to close and the “mark of the beast” is to be enforced, the Holy Spirit’s work must go far deeper than for any generation of God’s people in past history. The Lord Jesus cannot translate anyone who has cherished sin buried deep in the

heart, even if it is unknown to the believer, for if He were to do so the believer would be blotted out in the process. He loves us too much to come before we are ready!

9. In order to accomplish this once-in-history grand work, the Holy Spirit must fulfill His promise He made to the apostles long ago, to “guide [us] into all truth” (Jn. 16:13). The “latter rain” is not emotional excitement, jumping up and down, talking in unknown gibberish, rolling on the floor, or “laughing” as the enthusiasts do in Toronto; there is a counterfeit “holy spirit” and the deception will be lethal. The “latter rain” is a *message* of full-blown truth that will enable the believer to “overcome even as [Christ] overcame.”

10. There is a true Holy Spirit in contrast to a counterfeit holy spirit, and we must clearly discern with that “eyesalve” the Lord wants to give.

11. There is no way we can receive the true Holy Spirit and at the same time reject the gift He brings.

12. Repentance is the gift that only the Holy Spirit can give. It will be as deep as was our corporate sin. He is willing to give and He gives; let us not refuse His gift.

13. What kind of battle rages in each human heart? Romans 7:15-24.

It is a mistake to conclude from this passage that defeat is the normal experience for the believer in Christ. Paul introduces the Holy Spirit as the answer to this problem—Romans 8:1, 2. To “walk . . . after the Spirit” means to walk with Him, to let Him hold you by the hand. Complete victory is assured:

He makes us “free from the law (principle) of sin and death.” But how does He do this for us?

14. Is the Holy Spirit a passive observer of our battle with the flesh, giving us a little help now and then, or does He get into the battle Himself? Galatians 5:16-18.

What are those things “ye cannot do”? Good things, or bad things? Many misread this passage and construe it to teach the most terribly bad news imaginable. They conclude that even when the Holy Spirit strives (“lusts”) against the flesh, we still cannot do the good things that we would like to do. Can you imagine any news worse than that?

Read it again carefully: Because the Holy Spirit continually strives against the flesh, you cannot do the evil things the flesh prompts you to do if you will consent to “walk in the Spirit.” Light is stronger than darkness; love is stronger than hate; the Holy Spirit is stronger than the flesh. No, He will never force us, but He will lead us. “Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21).

Join your consent to His promptings and leadings. Say Yes to Him! Paul adds in verse 18 of our text, “But (the Greek means moreover), if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” An extra blessing comes: your sense of self-reproach and condemnation is gone, as well as your self-centered fear.

15. The message of the three angels of Revelation 14 is the “everlasting Good News.” How does Jesus

want us to understand His use of the words “easy” and “hard”? Matthew 11:28-30; Acts 26:14, 15.

Our Saviour does not contradict Himself. When He says that we should “strive to enter in at that strait gate,” He does not deny Himself (cf. Luke 13:24). The word “strait” does not mean difficult; it means narrow. We cannot enter unless we divest ourselves of this world’s baggage of the love of self. Many people refuse to do this, and they will be lost. But the more clearly we see the cross of Christ, the easier it becomes to take up our own cross.

Read His words carefully, again. A yoke always joins two oxen. Why is His “yoke . . . easy”? Because He is in it, pulling with us by the Holy Spirit, and He bears the weight. Why is it “hard” to “kick against the pricks” as Saul of Tarsus was doing? Because it is hard to fight against the mighty power of the Spirit. People wear themselves out resisting that persistent love.

16. Ellen White agrees with the words of Jesus:

“Do not . . . conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God’s love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves. . . . All along the steep road leading to eternal life there are well-springs of joy to refresh the weary” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 139, 140).

Who is stronger—Christ or the angel who fell from heaven—Satan?

Which is stronger, light or darkness?

Which is stronger, love (*agape*), or hatred? Which is stronger, that “much more abounding grace of the Lord Jesus” (Rom. 5:20, 21), or the power of our evil appetites and habits and obsessions and addictions?

Which is stronger: the power of death (that held Jesus Christ captive in Joseph’s tomb), or the resurrection power of the Father that raised Him up after three days?

We can’t say it often enough: that much more abounding grace is stronger than all the power of sin the devil can invent. In fact, there is in that grace “much more” power! “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

Let’s not try to serve God with anything less than that full power of that much more abounding grace that is revealed in Christ. That grace of Christ is the enemy of sin; it condemns it, defeats it, conquers it, annihilates it, so that we might be free indeed.

Then the grace of God will be manifested in us in “newness of life” (6:4). That grace “reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Then we discover something precious: it is easy to be saved and it is hard to be lost, when we begin to appreciate that much more abounding grace! We must not conclude that the upward path is the “hard path” and the downward path is the “easy one;” it’s the opposite. All the way that leads to hell there are impediments and obstacles to hinder us in that way; God is constantly trying to tell us this. It’s like we are driving on the freeway, you’re at the wheel (because you are the boss), but the Holy Spirit is

sitting beside you in the front seat. He is saying, Don’t stay on this freeway to hell; take this exit to the kingdom of God! That’s what Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would do when He gave Him the name “*Parakletos*,” the One called to sit down beside you and never leave you (John 16:7, 8; “*para*” = beside you; *kletos* = called).

Don’t misunderstand: you *do* have something to do: it’s to make the constant choice to let the Spirit guide you. But please remember, you are not your Savior yourself: you let the Lord save you. It is you who turns the wheel on to the blessed Exit coming up that leads to eternal life. But He guided you to do it; and you praise the Lord for ever and ever.

Does the mighty Holy Spirit, the third Person of the infinite Godhead, the “Comforter” whom Jesus promised would come and sit down beside us and never leave us (“*Parakletos*”),—does that mighty Power who is greater than the world itself, . . . does He concern Himself with the trivialities of our mundane day-to-day living?

Specifically, does He concern Himself with our deadly addictions to unhealthful food?

As the Comforter, He is the Friend who “sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24); it’s difficult to drive Him away for He is loathe to abandon anyone. The Holy Spirit is a Person who can be grieved away but if He must leave us it is in unutterable grief to Himself.

Slavery to appetite begins in childhood, often with candy or ice cream being given as a reward or “comfort” food; the innocent child thus learns a

terrible lie—that “comfort” comes not from the Holy Spirit but from sweets.

We say that the addict cannot smoke another cigarette or take another drink or indulge again in drugs, without the Holy Spirit pleading with him (her) personally, “No, don’t do this!” The addict has deafened his ears and just doesn’t “hear” the appeal. But the love of the Savior is real, nonetheless, seeking to save us from ourselves. He tries and tries.

The addict is the Prodigal Son sitting in the pigsty day after day; he cannot forget the prodigal love of the father. Blessed is the hour when he stands up, stomps his feet, chooses to hate the pigsty, and declares, “I will arise and go to my Father . . .”

He will say “No! No!” to this selfish appetite that has become a part of his being, and he will say “Yes! Yes!” to the true Comforter of his soul! (Cf. Luke 15:18).

“Oh, it’s so difficult,” self says; and yes, the Prodigal Son can’t do it without a Savior who “set His face to go to Jerusalem” to His cross (Luke 9:51), to die there the world’s second death. Christ was human as well as divine; the internal struggle was so intense at that moment that He summoned all His strength of will to begin that journey that He knew must end in the goodbye-forever-second-death. Every sinner in the world must re-enact that hour of utter commitment of soul; “the love (*agape*) of Christ constraineth us,” not craven fear, but a heart appreciation of the price which the Son of God had to endure so He could save us from hell

itself. Jesus had to “overcome” in that act when He “set His face.”

We too “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” in the choice to “overcome even as [He] overcame” (Rev. 3:21). Don’t get childishly obsessed with your “reward.” Think of your blessed grown-up fellowship with Him.