

THE HELPER—KEY TO OUR REVIVAL¹

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It is not enough that Christ died for us two thousand years ago, and stamped our debt “paid.” We are not like automobiles that have been filled up with gas and henceforth run on our own. We are like electric powered transit cars that have to keep in contact with the power line every moment or they stop.

Did Jesus complete His work two thousand years ago so that now He is on “leave”? Has He left us to get along as best we can on our own? These are questions that trouble many thoughtful people. If He did such a wonderful thing for the world two thousand years ago, why does it seem that He has abandoned the world today? Why make such a big investment and then apparently leave it to fail?

What we need to understand now is the on-going work of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. We are concerned not only about what God *has* done for us, but what He *is* now doing for us. Again, the Bible has only *good* news for us.

The Special Helper Sent to Stay with You.

A great religious system involving millions of people is based on the idea that a certain clergyman has been appointed “the vicar of Christ” on earth. The idea is that when Christ went away to heaven, He had to find someone to manage his business on earth. The supposed successors of St.

Peter take the honor of claiming to be the “vicar of Christ.”

It is correct that Christ needs a “vicar” on earth to carry on His business; but it is not correct to say that a fallible mortal man can fill such a role. Christ made it clear that His divinely appointed “vicar” is the Holy Spirit Himself. “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:16, 18, 26).

The Holy Spirit is God; He is “the Spirit of Christ” (1 Peter 1:11). There is truly only one God, but there are three persons in the Godhead, and they are truly One. Jesus said, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,” and, “The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead” is the Holy Spirit, who is also called “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ” (John 14:9; Romans 8:11, 9, 14).

In the flesh, Christ could not be in all places at the same time, but through the Holy Spirit He abides with every believer so closely that the early disciples who walked and talked with Jesus could not have been as close as we are. This is why Jesus said, “I am telling you the truth: it is better for you that I go away, because if I do not go, the Helper will not come to you. But if I do go away,

¹ John 14:16, 18, 26. 88, 268

then I will send Him to you. . . . When . . . the Spirit comes, He will lead you into all the truth. . . . He will give Me glory, because He will take what I say and tell it to you. All that My Father has is mine; that is why I said that the Spirit will take what I give Him and tell it to you” (John 16:7, 8, 13-15 N. B.). Jesus, our High Priest, continues to send to us His Holy Spirit to show us things that we have not seen in the Scriptures heretofore, and this is the “present truth.” He is teaching us today.

An addict to sin very much wants to stop but doesn’t know how. A thief is terribly ashamed when he is caught and punished, and wishes he knew how never to steal again. Instead of finding real happiness in wrong-doing, we usually find only bitter regret. How do we overcome our compulsion of evil?

We soon learn that trying to be better or making promises, will not help. Our trouble is like a strange sickness; the patient wishes he knew what is wrong and how to be healed. We are like the sons and daughters of a great king who have been taken slaves in a war, and now we are helpless captives longing for release. Jesus says, “I am telling you the truth; everyone who sins is a slave of sin” (John 8:34, N.B.). Sin has made us slaves; it has alienated us from our best Friend, God. It has made us think things about Him that are not true: “You were yourselves estranged from God; you were His enemies in heart and mind, and your deeds were evil” (Col. 1:21, N.E.B.).

This kind of slavery is an everyday thing. Paul said, “I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I

do I allow not, for what I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I” (Rom. 7:14, 15). What a war to have inside us! “Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. . . . I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law [or principle] . . . warring against the law [or principle] of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law [or principle] of sin which is in my members” (vss, 20-23). Another translation says, “When I want to do the right, only the wrong is within my reach.” Then Paul cries out like we all do, “Miserable creature that I am, who is there to rescue me out of this body doomed to death?” (vs. 24, N.E.B.).

What is this “death”? “Sin pays the wage, and the wage is death” (Rom. 6:23, N.E.B.). Who wants “wages” like that? Some do, because Jesus says, “All they that hate Me love death” (Prov. 8:26). But we, like Paul, cry out “Who is there to rescue me?”

How the Helper Comes to Our Rescue

Paul gives the answer: “God, alone, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Thanks be to God! . . . There is no condemnation for those who are united with Christ Jesus, because Christ Jesus the life-giving law of the Spirit has set us free from the law [principle] of sin and death” (Rom. 7:25; 8:1, N.E.B.). “The law of sin and death” is simply the weakness in our flesh that drags us down to wrongdoing (like alcoholism) when we really prefer to do right. But now a stronger power than sin becomes ours when we are united to Christ—the “life-giving law of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit rules the heart and overmasters the evil that used to drag us down!

In other words, the Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and applies them to us. He makes them real and practical for us today. Paul goes on to explain how what Christ did for us two thousand years ago the Holy Spirit now does for us.

“What the flesh could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the [Holy] Spirit” (Rom. 8:3-4).

If you had an enemy constantly troubling you, wouldn't you be happy if he were “condemned” in a court of law and locked up where he could no longer bother you? That is what happens to sin in our flesh! Jesus came in the likeness of our “sinful flesh,” got under our load, met temptation as we must meet it, and overthrew and conquered sin right there inside our own flesh. Perhaps we can illustrate.

Suppose a father tells his little child to take a hammer and drive a big nail into a piece of hard wood. The child tries, but fails. The hammer is too heavy, the nail is too big, and the wood is too hard. Where is the weakness? In the hammer? Shall the father throw the hammer away? No, you say, the hammer is all right; the weakness is in the child's flesh.

Now, suppose father takes the child's arm in his own, and grasps the hammer tightly in the child's hand, holds the nail firmly—look what he can do! The nail is easily driven into the wood.

Let the “hammer” be the law of God. Although Paul says “the law is weak,” it is not weak in itself; it is only “weak *through the flesh*.” Whose flesh? Yours and mine. There is no value in throwing the law away. God solves the problem by sending Jesus “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” and right there “condemning sin in the flesh.” Jesus becomes our Substitute. The victory that took place in Him becomes our victory when we have faith in Him.

God has already done this for us in Christ; *now the Holy Spirit makes it all effective for us*. We are tempted by sin. Sin is too strong for us and we shall surely fail unless we find help. The Holy Spirit therefore convicts us of righteousness, which is the righteousness of Christ (see John 16:8-11). But what is His “righteousness”? As we have seen, it was perfected “in the likeness of sinful flesh”. In his flesh Jesus had a battle as we have. He was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). He took *our* nature upon Himself, “made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3).

He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified [that is, Christ Himself and we] are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren. . . Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. . . Verily he took upon not on him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed [heredity] of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to

make reconciliation for the sins of the people for in that He Himself suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:11, 13-18).

Therefore, you are never to feel that you are alone on your own. No temptation can come to you that Christ has not already conquered “in the flesh.” No matter who you are or where you are, no matter how far into sin you have fallen, Christ’s arm is long enough to reach down to where you are. No matter how powerful or how alluring is the temptation that assails you, Christ already met this temptation and conquered it; He “condemned sin in the flesh.” From now on there is no excuse for any sin!

Even this alienation from God that we feel Christ has taken and abolished: “You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unproveable in His sight” (Colossians 1:21, 22).

You may know the great thrill of victory over temptation because the Holy Spirit applies *in* you the victory that Christ in the flesh won *for* you. As we are all addicted to sin, this victory is for us all; if you are a slave to lust and passion, His victory is for you; if jealousy or hatred and anger has made you a captive to evil emotions, you may now have deliverance.

Our part is to *consent* to be united with Christ. Like the little child who permitted his father to unite his weakness to his strength in order to drive the nail in the hard wood, we *permit* Christ to work “in you that

which is well pleasing in His sight” (Hebrews 13:21). “The life-giving law of the Spirit has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1, N. E. B.).

Someone may say, “Please don’t tell me something that isn’t really true! This weakness of our flesh that the Bible calls “the law of sin and death” is strong—too strong for me. Do you mean to say that there is a life-giving ‘law of the Spirit’ that will really set me free?” Yes, there is; and Paul says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Romans 1:16). Before the Saviour was born, the angel said of Him, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people *from* their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Note, not in their sins. That would be a mere mockery, like telling a man he is free when his chains still hold him.

You have seen the tremendous power of lightning, shattering a giant tree and splintering it to slivers. The true gospel of Christ shatters this “law of sin” in us.

“Yes,” someone says, “I have seen how lightning strikes and what it does. But I have never felt this power you speak of strike *me*! How can I know there is power in the gospel of Christ to break the bonds of sin that have held me?” You know that electricity is in lightning; and if you have doubted the reality of electricity, all you have to do is to stick your finger in a socket that is live from the mains, and you will know first-hand forever that electricity does have power.

We can know first-hand the power that delivers us from bad habits and evil thoughts. The secret is to be united with Christ through the Holy Spirit, as a lamp is united to the main supply of electricity. Without Christ, we are like a lamp that is disconnected from the mains. Although created to shine, it does not shine. It's like Paul says, "How to perform that which is good I find not." When we choose to "walk after the Spirit," the power works within us. Anyone can plug a lamp into a socket regardless of whether he is a good man or a bad man. And anyone can come to Christ just as he is; he does not have to try to make himself better first. By faith, anyone can "plug in."

The power-house is the cross of Christ. The Scriptures rightly tell the wonders of the cross of Christ. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me" (Galatians 6:14). What does this mean, "The world is crucified unto me?" John tells us what "the world" is: it is "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). It is all around us and in us, the power of sin. Now look at the power of the cross: "the world" is stricken dead, "crucified," made nothing, even made abhorrent, to me.

You may say, "How can that be? Everybody loves the world, things, money, pleasure!" Paul once loved it, but something of *greater* power delivered him from it.

Let us illustrate. Here is a little child who has been lost in a big crowd of people in the city. He can't find his mother. He is crying. A kind policeman tries to

comfort him and offers him a soft drink, ice cream, and candy. These are the things the children love. This child loves these things, but he also loves his mother; and even if a stranger should give him all the sweets in the world, he would not be happy.

Suddenly he sees his mother. What does he do? He throws away the drink and ice cream and comes running to meet the one he loves more than anything else in the whole world.

All the pleasures of sin become to us no more than cotton candy to such a child when we see Jesus on that cross. The greatest demonstration of God's love for us has been His sending His own Son into the world to give us life through Him. We see real love, not in the fact that we love God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to make personal atonement for our sins" (1 John 4:9, 10, Phillips).

It's fantastic when you begin to understand what the Bible teaches. So wonderful is the glory of Christ's righteousness that what the world calls "glory" becomes distasteful to you in contrast. Paul says: "All those things that I might count as profit I now reckon as loss for Christ's sake. Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ and be completely united with Him" (Philippians 3:7-9, G.N.B.).

Very hungry people sometimes eat leather and sawdust for want of something better. We "eat" sin because we are starved for the true love of God.

That love is revealed in Christ at the cross. Nothing else has such power to draw people. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," said Jesus (John 12:32).

A girl left the home of her shepherd-father and went to the sinful big city, where she became lost in the ways of evil. Like some young women she got caught up in the culture. Her poor father waited long for her return. Finally he went himself to the city and walked up and down its dark streets, making his familiar shepherd's call so that his lost girl would hear and understand. One night while she was partying, she heard the call of her dear old father, outside. With tears in her eyes, she rushed outside to meet him. She could not resist that call of love.

If we do not resist the love of Christ revealed at His cross, we will be drawn to Him. The Holy Spirit will give us the precious gift of repentance, a true heart of sorrow for the sin itself. Peter says that God has exalted Christ "with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).

What is repentance? A boy has stolen something, and the police catches him to punish him. He is sorry that he has been caught; but when he gets a chance, he will steal again. Has he repented? No; he is merely sorry for the punishment. He does not yet know what it is to be sorry for the actual sin of stealing. The Holy Spirit gives true repentance so that we actually abhor the sin itself. Punishment does not bring true repentance. This is why our penal codes so seldom reform criminals. "The

goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4).

This is illustrated in the experience of a man who did something bad and then committed crime after crime in an effort to cover up his first mistake. Worst of all, he did nothing to prevent an innocent man from being sent to prison when he himself should have been the one to be jailed. As so often happens to a criminal, he lost his sense of fairness and kindness, and his wife and children left him. His home was ruined. Yet that hard-hearted man would not repent. He insisted, "I cannot, I will not, I dare not, I must not repent!"

Finally the poor innocent man who was in prison wrongfully because of him did a very wonderful thing. He wrote the hard-hearted man a letter forgiving him for all the wrong he had done to him. Can you imagine what happened? That letter broke the heart of that wicked man and brought him to repentance and confession of his crimes. He said, "All the troubles that came to me failed to bring me to repentance; but when I was forgiven, I repented."

We are all like that man. God's goodness and kindness bring us to repentance. And such repentance always lead us to confess: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). One who believes cannot hide his sin: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). If we have stolen something, told lies, injured someone, we will

confess. The Holy Spirit will give us strength to do what we thought was impossible!

The Helper causes us to be born again. David committed the sin of adultery, and then in an effort to cover it all he committed murder. But when the Holy Spirit convicted him, he confessed. And the Lord forgave him.

Sometimes sick people need something more than medicine. A poor man sick of the palsy was brought to Jesus one day. His four friends had to break up the tile roof in order to lay him down at the feet of Jesus. The poor man did not ask for anything, not even healing. When Jesus saw him, He recognized that the man was suffering from guilt. He said to him, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Oh, how that poor man's face shone with a look of happiness and peace! Now he was not afraid to die, for the awful burden was lifted that had been crushing out his life. To prove that He had power to forgive sin, Jesus commanded the sufferer to pick up his bed and walk away. Because the man believed, he obeyed, and was made completely whole. (See Mark 2:1-12).

Repentance and forgiveness bring the "new birth" through the working of the Holy Spirit. *Thus the Lord keeps on saving us.* "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. . . The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:6, 8).

A person cannot know when or how the Holy Spirit first began to work on his heart. Perhaps it was

through a word spoken by a friend, or a song about Christ that he heard, or a tract that he read. Perhaps it was a TV sermon he heard one day that sank deep into his heart—unrealized perhaps. But somehow the seed of truth was sown in his heart. It seemed to be buried for a time; but finally it sprouted and then bore fruit. Now he gladly makes his full surrender to the Lord.

Some people call this "sudden conversion." But it is the result of years of work by the Holy Spirit. Peter says that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). Now we should, continues Peter, "as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2, 3). *Cooperate* with the Holy Spirit by reading the Bible. Be thankful that you are a member of the heavenly family by freely talking with the Lord in prayer. In this way you will grow to a spiritual height and happiness that you never thought possible.

To be a "man of God," a true son or daughter of the King of kings—what a privilege!

It is your privilege through the grace of Christ and the continued ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Will you choose now to say "Yes!" to Him?