

The Holy Spirit the Comforter

by Roy Hession

Roy Hession's sermon emphasizes the Holy Spirit's role as the Comforter, guiding believers from conviction to peace through the finished work of Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1, John 16:14, Romans 4:25, Romans 7:10, Romans 7:24, Ephesians 1:20

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Comfort in Christ"

Description

Roy Hession emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter for those who repent, transitioning from conviction of sin to the assurance of Christ's sufficiency. He illustrates how the Spirit comforts the contrite by revealing the finished work of Christ, encouraging believers to rest in His grace rather than striving for self-improvement. Hession highlights that the Holy Spirit's ministry is to lead us away from despair and towards the peace found in Jesus, who is clear of judgment. The Comforter not only addresses our sin but also provides for all our needs, empowering us for service through a renewed vision of Christ. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit invites us to come to Jesus, where we find true rest and strength.

Transcript

HAVING seen the Holy Spirit as the convicter of those who sin, we now need to see Him as the Comforter of those who repent. The moment the Spirit succeeds in breaking us in repentance, the whole direction of His ministry seems to change—it is directed wholly to comforting the now contrite one and encouraging him to find everything in Christ. To a people who had 'received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins', the message was of old, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God' (Isa. 40. 1). And so it is today.

If the translators used the word 'Comforter', it is because the Greek word bears that meaning as much as 'Advocate', and those who know the Holy Spirit's work in their hearts know how worthily He bears that name. He who is so relentless and disconcerting in His conviction of sin is wonderfully sweet in the comfort He gives the one who mourns for sin and laments his poverty. 'Blessed are they that mourn,' said Jesus, 'for they shall be comforted,' and it is the Holy Spirit who applies that comfort. And He does so by taking the things of Christ and showing them unto us (John 16. 14). This simply means that to the repentant heart He witnesses of Christ and of the sufficiency of His precious Blood for his peace and right standing with God, and bids him believe in Him afresh and rejoice. He reveals that the sins which we confess were anticipated and settled by the Lord Jesus on the Cross before they were even committed, that provision has been made ahead of time for the very poverty in which we find ourselves. He witnesses of a risen Saviour showing us that God has set the seal of His infinite satisfaction upon the atoning work of

our Lord by raising Him again from the dead, and that if God is satisfied with His work on our behalf, we may be too. He witnesses to the struggling saint hoping for improvement in the flesh, that the man who commits these sins (the 'old man' of Romans 6 which merely means the 'man of old') was judicially crucified with Christ (that is, in God's sight ended, not mended). He may therefore cease to be disappointed in a man whom God has brought to an end in the Cross, and may turn wholly to Christ who is made to him all he needs. And as the Spirit thus witnesses to him, he is enabled to believe the blessed record, and he is free in spirit, rejoicing with joy and full of glory for such a wonderful salvation.

I know not how the Spirit moves,

Convincing men of sin,

Revealing Jesus in His Word

Creating faith in Him.

We may not know how He does it--sometimes through some word of Scripture, or through another's testimony, or the line of a hymn, or in more direct and inexplicable ways--but we may certainly know He does it, for this is His great work in the Church.

We seem to appreciate most intensely the Spirit's ministry as Comforter, when, having become cold and out of touch with God, we try to get back to Him by 'works'. How natural it is for us to imagine that if we have got away from Him by committing sin, we shall come back to Him by doing good. And so we promise ourselves we will try harder, we set ourselves higher goals, we seek to do more for God or even to spend longer on our devotions. All these things are right, of course, but in as much as we so often do not attain those goals, we only end by burdening ourselves with additional self-reproach and an added sense of failure. We become tense in our efforts to improve, and condemned because we cannot succeed. We have come to experience what Paul did, when he said, 'The commandment, which was ordained to life (if I could attain to it), I found to be unto death (because I failed to do so),' and if we go farther along this road, we shall be in the same place of despair that he came to when he said, 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Rom. 7. 10 and 24). What a relief it is when the Holy Spirit points us, as He did Paul, away from our work to Another's work, the finished work of Christ for us on the Cross, whereby we see that the work has been done for us, the distance between us and God bridged and peace made! The Spirit bids us cease from trying to get peace by our efforts, and to come to Jesus as a sinner and rest in what He had done. As we do so, the burden of striving and self-reproach slips away from our hearts, and the Comforter whispers peace to our hearts.

Nothing either great or small,

Nothing sinner, no!

Jesus did it, did it all,

Long, long ago.

Till to Jesus' work you cling,

By a simple faith,

Doing is a deadly thing,

Doing ends in death.

Cast your deadly doing down,

Down at Jesus' feet,

Stand in Him, in Him alone,

Gloriously complete!

One of the best illustrations of the Spirit's testimony to the finished work of Jesus is that of the dove returning to Noah in the ark, 'And, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off : so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth' (Gen. 8. 11). The testimony that the dove brought back was the olive leaf in its mouth. As Noah saw it, he knew that there was one spot on the earth from which the waters had passed, there was one bit that was clear of judgment, and this was a message of peace to those in the ark. Today the Holy Spirit brings the testimony that there is One Person who is clear of judgment. He was once under it, absolutely so, but He has come out of it in resurrection power. But the judgment of which He is now clear is our judgment. Therefore if our Surety is clear of it, we for whom He stood surety are clear of it too. This is what is meant when it says that He 'Who was delivered for our offences ... was raised again for our justification' (Rom. 4.25).

If we want to see the dove with the olive leaf in her mouth, read through the Acts of the Apostles. All the time we see the Holy Spirit is bearing witness to a risen Christ.

'Whom God hath raised up' (2. 24).

'This Jesus hath God raised up' (2. 32).

'Whom God hath raised from the dead' (3. 15).

'Him God raised up the third day' (10. 40), etc., etc.

Over and over again the Spirit presents the blessed fact that Jesus is clear of the judgment He was once under. This means that in God's sight and reckoning we are as clear of the condemnation and reproach (even self-reproach) of sin as He is. He has been under it; the waves and billows have gone over Him; but He is beyond it for ever now, and that 'for our justification'. The Spirit now witnesses with our spirit that we are as clear of it all as He is.

This is the solid comfort which the Holy Spirit brings to the despairing soul that has learnt to repent. If we take that in our hearts we shall obtain a true sense of the love of God as never before. This is the first wave of the Spirit's power in our souls, the first effect of His indwelling, to shed the love of God abroad in our hearts (see Rom. 5. 5), and thus provoke our love for Him in return.

Let us not forget, then, that the Holy Spirit only convicts in order to comfort. It will help us to distinguish His voice from that of the devil. The devil is called the 'accuser of the brethren' and his accusations to the sensitive conscience are sometimes confused with the convictions of the Holy Spirit. But his accusations never have any comfort in view. They are simply 'nagging', which only leads to despair and bondage. Even as you assent to them, you instinctively know that there is never going to be any end to them. He always leads the soul back to Sinai, to the law, to the standards we have not yet attained and thus to despair. The Holy Spirit's convictions, however, are short and sharp, and we know instinctively that if we

would bow to them and say 'yes', there is nothing but peace for our souls. If the devil leads us to Sinai, the Holy Spirit always leads us to Calvary. He is ever the sweet messenger of the new covenant of peace for sinners.

The Holy Spirit's comfort, however, does not only deal with the answer of Christ for our sin, but with His whole resources for our every other conceivable need. 'He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.' If the government of our affairs is on our own shoulders our one concern is that we shall have power adequate for our responsibilities. But if the government is on His shoulders, then the only One who needs to have the power is He, and that the Spirit delights to show us He has. He reveals Him to our hearts, not merely as the One who can overcome the devil, but who has done so already through His Cross. He shows Him to us seated 'In the heavenly places, far above all principality and power' (Eph. 1. 20, 21), and supreme over every opposing force, and ourselves identified with Him there (see Eph. 2. 6). This means that we are not merely on the winning side, but on the side that has already won; we do not fight for victory but from it.

Till we have some such revelation of the Lord Jesus in our problems, we are tense, worried and striving, and things are on top of us. But when, in our hour of need, the Spirit shows us Jesus and the resources that are His, we are free, we see ourselves in Him as 'the head, and not the tail' (Deut. 28. 13) and defeat is banished in the basic realm from which it needs to be banished, the realm of our spirit. Being victorious in spirit we become victorious in the other spheres too, for faith is the victory that overcomes the world (see 1 John 5. 4). And as we go forward with a new boldness and confidence we find God working for us in our situation.

The story is told of how Spurgeon was once burdened and worried about his problems and responsibilities. Suddenly as he was riding in his carriage he kicked his legs in the air and laughed aloud. He says that what brought joy and release to his heart was seeing himself like a fish worrying as to whether there was water enough for it to swim in when all the time it was swimming in the Atlantic Ocean, and such he saw the grace of his Lord to be for all his need. There in that carriage the mighty Advocate of the Lord Jesus exercised His ministry as Comforter on behalf of a needy servant of God.

This brings us to the whole question of the power of the Holy Spirit for service, for which some of us so ardently long. Here I can only give my own experience. I find that the Holy Spirit endues with power from on high, not by fixing my eyes on that power so that I fervently pray for it, but rather on the Lord Jesus risen from the dead and showing me the power and position which are His. As I see that, I lose my burdens, fears and striving. I find myself made strong in faith again, and endued with the needed heavenly power for the service at hand. Elisha received the double portion of the Spirit which rested on Elijah only when he saw his master ascend into heaven. Then the mantle, symbol of that power, fluttered down to his feet. Only as we allow the Holy Spirit to show us again the adequacy of the Lord Jesus and believingly receive His revelation, will we find ourselves robed with power from on high and going forth with boldness, to see God working with us.

Sometimes in an evangelistic campaign in which I am involved some Christians have said to me, 'Is it not strange how on a certain day the "break" came, after which the whole campaign took a new turn?' It was not strange to me. I knew what happened to a burdened and tense evangelist on the day in question alone in his bedroom rather what he was given to see. He saw Jesus crowned with glory and honour with all things under His feet. The waves he thought were over his head, he saw to be under His feet.

So often we are praying for supply, when what the Spirit wants to give us is sight-sight of Jesus, Jesus crowned and victorious.

It may be asked how do we get this new sight of Jesus as and when we need it? Not by trying to get it, nor even, I suggest, by praying for it, but rather by telling God we have not got it. Let us not dissipate our energies for the time being anywhere else but in this one direction. Tell Him you are not seeing Jesus, tell Him you are in bad shape, that you are not free, that you have not peace. Tell Him you are struggling to get by your efforts what deep down you know is a gift, but that you are struggling none the less. Tell Him that today you have not this sight of Jesus, His Blood and His victory that you had yesterday. Make no effort to get it, just tell Him you have not got it. Then allow Him to show you why you do not have it. He may show you dark and unsuspected things, but say yes to Him. All this is what is meant by going to the feet of Jesus, to the foot of His Cross. Such phrases may sound like cliches to some, but they express an awesome and hallowed experience to others. It is there that the Blood of Jesus avails for you. And you will not have been long at His feet before the Holy Spirit arises with healing in His wings, and gives you to see all you need to see of Jesus, and to possess all you need to possess of His fullness.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/roy-hession/the-holy-spirit-the-comforter/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net