

Our Helper In Prayer

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] And again for a little to the chapter we read in John's Gospel, John chapter 14. If we could read again at verse 16.

And I will ask my father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

But you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. And we know at the beginning of the chapter Jesus has just told the disciples that he's going to go away from them.

And while that was news that absolutely floored them, flattened them, because they hadn't really grasped the totality of what Jesus's mission was about.

And Jesus had told them they just weren't getting hold of. They weren't grasping really what he was saying. But he also tells them that while he's going to go away, he's also going to come back and he's going to take them to be with himself.

[1 : 10] And the wonderful thing is that the promise that he gave the disciples then is a promise that goes on for all his disciples right up until now.

And of course, we know that the main way in which Jesus went from them was to the cross, because this is the way he was making preparation. There is no preparation for salvation apart from the cross.

So when Jesus was telling them that he was going from them, that's what he tells us at the beginning, he said to them, I go and prepare a place for you.

And we must always remember that the main way in which Christ has prepared the place for us is by his death and resurrection. But that being said, we've also got to remember that Jesus is also preparing us for that place in glory.

And this Bible makes it very clear to us that through all the different providences that go on in our lives, accompanied by the word and the ministry of the spirit, that God is preparing us and shaping us and molding us and making us ready for that glory.

[2 : 29] And we know that at that there'll come a moment when we pass from time into eternity. And as our catechism puts it beautifully, that the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory.

Because we find it so difficult to understand how it's possible for us, as we are right now, to go into the holiness of glory.

Because we are so conscious of our sin and our failing. And we say, how is it possible that someone so unclean as me can be brought into the purity of glory?

But we are led to believe and to understand that a transition takes place at death and where all the great work that has gone on in a moment, that we are made completely fit for this new environment.

Our souls are made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory. So this is all part of the work that Jesus is here talking about. And of course, when Jesus told them that he was going away from them, we find that Thomas, and we could almost say, good old Thomas with the questions.

[3 : 47] Thomas, I think we saw that before, was one of the disciples that tended to be very slow on the uptake. He didn't grasp things very quickly.

And he tended to be a bit of a pessimist. But he asks a great question. And some of the great statements in the Bible have come on the back of a question.

And it's good for us to ask questions. And Thomas, he says very simply, but he says to Jesus, Lord, we do not know where you're going. How can we know the way?

And in response to that question, Jesus gives us one of the great answers. And it's at the very heart of everything that we believe, where Jesus says, I am the way and the truth and the life, not just our way, but the way.

And it's important to emphasize that, that Jesus doesn't just say that I am one of many ways to God. There is only one way. Jesus goes on actually to say that.

[4 : 53] And he says, no one comes to the Father except through me. You know, people will tell us, and I'm sure you've heard people say, that it doesn't really matter how you come to God, as long as you're sincere, that sincerity is the key.

Well, we know that we can be sincerely wrong. And the Bible and Jesus makes it abundantly clear that he is the way, he is the truth, and he is the life.

And it's important for us to emphasize that, particularly in the day that we live in, where people say that you cannot be as dogmatic and emphatic. We can only say what the word of God tells us.

And then in verses 13 and 14, Jesus gives the disciples the great encouragement to pray. And then in verse 16, he talks about the sending of the Spirit, the helper.

And of course, as we know, the coming of the Spirit in power, the Holy Spirit came in power in Pentecost. Of course, the Holy Spirit was always present, but not as manifest, didn't display his presence in the way that he did after Pentecost.

[6 : 13] We know that the Holy Spirit is wonderfully linked to prayer. In fact, we would go as far as to say that we can't really have true prayer apart from the Spirit.

And so Jesus here calls the Holy Spirit, the helper. This is what he says. And I will give you a helper to be with you.

And again, if you look down at the bottom, at the bottom of you, if you have the ESV with you, it also says advocate or counselor. So that these are other descriptions of this word helper, which in a sense really helps our understanding of really what the Holy Spirit's work is.

So we're thinking about this, the Holy Spirit is a helper. And we have to ask ourselves, in what ways does the Holy Spirit help us?

And of course, the Holy Spirit helps us as we see tying it into the context here. He helps us in prayer. And that's very, very important. You remember how the disciples came to Jesus and they said, Lord, teach us to pray.

[7 : 27] And I'm sure the disciples, they came to Jesus requesting that because they had heard him pray. They had seen him pray. They had seen his commitment to prayer.

They saw how freely he prayed, how readily he prayed. And I'm sure if they were like us, and they would have been, they would often have found prayer maybe hard or difficult.

And they would say, you know, Lord, you're really going to have to teach us to pray because we can't pray the way that we see you able to pray.

And of course, we know in response to that, the Lord gave us what we have as the Lord's prayer. And so the Holy Spirit, we come and we say, Lord, teach us to pray.

And one of the things that the Holy Spirit does is the Holy Spirit prompts us to pray and prompts us in prayer. And I'm sure that there have been many occasions when we have felt the urge to pray.

[8 : 33] Now, I can say quite categorically, if you and I get the urge to pray, that that urge does not come from Satan. Satan will never urge us to pray because he will do everything in his power to prevent us praying.

You and I know that how often we go to pray and everything is put against us. Our mind is distracted and other distractions come in the way. You can, there's 101 things happen when we want to pray.

So Satan will never encourage us or prompt us to pray. So we'll be sure of that. Neither will our own heart of unbelief encourage us or prompt us to pray.

So when we are prompted to pray, and whatever it's about, whether we're praying about something about ourselves or whether we're praying about a particular situation or we're praying about a particular person who might be in the room beside you or could be on the other side of the world, we need to respond to these promptings because we believe that these promptings come to us from the Holy Spirit, that this is one of the ways in which the Spirit works.

And, you know, I'm sure we've all had times like that where we felt compelled to pray for someone. Some of the times you will never have any understanding or knowledge of why.

[10 : 07] But I'm sure we all know of times where you have felt that you had to pray for someone and you have found out why. Often we won't.

Often we don't know in this world. So very often that we have to pray. But this is all part of God's wonderful ministry for the church because God is watching over us all the time.

And it's part of the wonderful way of which where he administers the government of his church is having his people pray for one another.

And so, so often we are prompted to pray for one another. And again, the Holy Spirit prompts us to pray for the glory of God.

Now, quite often, and I'm sure I'm as guilty as anybody, sometimes when we pray, we might just add on. And we pray, Lord, for your glory's sake. We pray for your glory.

[11 : 10] We pray, Lord, this for your glory. And we know that we should and we want that. But sometimes we don't, we maybe don't think about it in the way that we ought. But when the Holy Spirit is moving us to pray and bringing that into our thinking, then our prayer will be such that we will be, we will be keener or we will be more desirous, I should say, of God's glory being brought to bear than even our own will as such being fulfilled.

Because when we're deciding the glory of God, then our own will becomes second place. We genuinely want the glory of God to be displayed and to be seen.

And you and I know that sometimes God will work in a very different way to the way that we would expect or sometimes even want. But the Holy Spirit leads us and directs us in this particular way.

And again, the Holy Spirit in prayer brings God's word so often to our mind to pray. And of course, this is essential, a key to prayer.

You know, again, sometimes people say, well, I don't really know how to pray or what to pray for. Well, if our prayers are based upon God's word, then we're always praying in the right direction.

[12 : 38] And we know that when we are praying according to God's word, we are praying according to God's will. Because God's will and God's word are one.

They're not working in opposite directions. And so the Holy Spirit will often bring the promises of God to bear. And you know, it's a wonderful thing to have God's promise and to go to the Lord like David did and say, Lord, do as you have said.

So it's key that our prayers are based upon God's word. And of course, the Holy Spirit, not just with regard to prayer, but the Holy Spirit is often bringing God's word to bear upon our different situations.

Very often, I'm sure you can think back in your own life where sometimes God's word just comes and you know that this is a word from the Lord. It's just come, like as it were, out of the blue.

And you're given the faith to cling hold of it. And sometimes it might be that you're puzzled. You're looking for a direction.

[13:45] You're not sure about something that you're to do, but you don't know, am I to do it or am I what? And you're in a quandary and you're praying about it. And then God's word, it might be while you're reading it, but sometimes it just comes to you.

And sometimes God will bring his word in a way that you know this is him speaking to you. And it might be sometimes it could be when you're really down. You are so down, you're so low.

And then God brings his word of comfort and strength into your soul. Because God's word is strengthening. That's part of what, when the Holy Spirit brings God's word, he brings strength into your soul at the same time.

And so we find that the Holy Spirit, of course, is working in us and working for us. And one of the things that the Holy Spirit does for us, we're told in scripture, is that he intercedes for us.

We're told that in Romans. And so we have this helper. This is part of what he does as the great helper, that he makes intercession for us. Now, we've got to remember that the Bible also tells us that Jesus makes intercession for us.

[15:04] And the way that Jesus makes intercession for us and the way the Holy Spirit will intercede with groanings, which it's different in different ways.

And I think maybe when you have this word translated down at the bottom and advocate, probably gives a, puts, sheds more light on it. Because when Jesus is interceding for us, what he is doing is he is standing as our representative.

And he is presenting himself and his own finished work and his own worth and his own merit as the grounds of our acceptance before God.

And so he is there as the advocate, pleading for us on behalf of what he has done. But, you know, an advocate also is somebody who will maybe advise a client on what to say.

I understand that that's part of what would be involved. And that's exactly what the Holy Spirit is doing. He's advising us or he is leading us in what we ought to say in when we're speaking to the Father.

[16:20] So we can see that the work of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, of course, that's one God, we see the difference in these things.

And so we find that the Holy Spirit is working in us all the time and helping us to pray aright.

And the Holy Spirit, of course, as we see here, it's a counselor who's advising us and directing us and guiding us in the right way. But the Bible also tells us that the Holy Spirit is very easily grieved.

We can grieve the Holy Spirit. It's like it's as if he's very, very sensitive. And that is why it is so important that we live in obedience to the Lord.

And I think maybe that's why Jesus says in verse 15, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he'll give you another helper to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth.

[17:32] So there's this obedience is tied in to the work of the Holy Spirit. And the beauty of this, first and foremost, is that Jesus says for the coming of the helper is forever, to be with you forever.

Now, isn't that wonderful? That there is no point once the Holy Spirit comes into your life as advocate, as counselor, as helper, when he will forsake you, when he will depart.

But that having been said, we don't always have the light. We don't always have the sense of the Spirit's presence with us.

Because as we said, we can grieve the Spirit. And if we are living in disobedience for not living the way we should, and we're grieving the Spirit, then the Spirit's influence in our life will not be so great.

And we won't be so aware of his help. And we won't be so aware of his light and his encouragement and all these things. Bible shows us with regard to prayer that it gives us many different instances of how there will be certain things will block us in prayer.

[18:45] We're told that by being unjust, it hinders our prayers. We're told that by being loveless, it hinders our prayer. We're even told by having an unforgiving spirit, it's a hindrance to prayer.

We're told that husbands, remember what in Peter it says, husbands are to consider it to their wives. And it says here, lest your prayers be hindered.

So it would appear that even that can grieve the Spirit, it can affect our prayer life. We have the most wonderful privilege in having this divine helper with us, enabling us to pray in the Spirit.

And we must always ask the Lord, Lord, help me to pray. Help me to be in the Spirit as I pray. Because that way, it won't be simply words. It'll be from the heart. It'll be real.

There'll be a reality to it. It's a spirit of truth. And our prayers will be true. They'll be real. So let us thank the Lord for this wonderful privilege that is given to us in the coming of the helper, the Holy Spirit, into our heart.

[20:00] Let us pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks for the great gift that you have given to every single one of us in sending the helper, the Holy Spirit, into our heart.

we pray that you will bless every one of us. Bless us with health and with strength and body, mind, and soul. Encourage us, Lord, as we go along in a world that is so full of discouragement, a world that is in enmity against yourself.

Oh, Lord, have mercy upon us, we pray. Have mercy upon our rulers and our leaders. Have mercy upon us in everything that we do. Lord, as we heard, Lord, we pray for Ukraine and the fearful situation there.

Oh, we would ask, Lord, that you would turn, turn the enmity so that peace will come. Peace may reign. Lord, we pray for those who are so ill.

And we remember again, Duncan McLean, and we pray for Annabelle and the family. Lord, we commit to your care. We ask for Mrs. Macphail and a very, very serious major surgery.

[21:07] Ask, Lord, your hand to be upon her. We pray for Annie MacArthur too. We ask that your blessing will be upon her. And all who are laid aside at this time, we ask that your healing, your gracious, restoring hand might be upon them.

We remember the family of the late Ian Campbell and pray that your blessing will be upon them. And ask, Lord, that you would be with them. Watch over us, and we ask that you will part us now with your blessing, taking us to our home safely and forgive us our every sin in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to conclude singing.