

Text: John 15:26-27

Title: “The Helper ... Through Our Witness”

The atmosphere must have been intense as Jesus huddled together with His disciples on the night before He was crucified. He was squeezing everything He could out of the last opportunity He had to speak with them. They have to be prepared for what they will face and who will be with them to help them. Open your Bibles to John 15:26. John’s Gospel records for us how Jesus spent that last evening with His followers. In John 13 He washed their feet just before they shared together in the Last Supper. In John 14-16 we have Jesus’ crucial teaching on the life His followers are to live after He is crucified, raised from the dead and ascended back to heaven. The Holy Spirit of Jesus Himself would come to live in them and help them live the life of a true Christ-follower (as He does for us as believers today). But Jesus warned them about the inevitable opposition that will come from the world because they belong to Christ. The servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Christ they’ll also persecute His followers. In this climate of opposition the disciples needed to know they were not alone. They are not to go into hiding or to shrink back in fear. Jesus has no plans for retreat. **Read John 15:26-27.**

You see, Jesus fully expected that His followers would live counter-cultural lives and experience hardship because of it. Their witness would be so bold and their lifestyle so radically different that the world would see the difference. The vision Jesus had for His followers never included just sitting in a church service and thinking that’s all that was expected of them as disciples. With the help of the Holy Spirit their lives should explode with power as they lived and testified for Jesus.

Look again at v.26. From the very lips of Jesus we’re told about the coming of the the Counselor, or the Helper. He will be sent at the command of Christ from the Father. The Holy Spirit who had been in the circle of the Trinity of the Father, Son and Spirit for eternity ... who executed the commands of the Father and the Son in creating the universe ... who made the person and the power of God real to His people in the OT ... who came in power upon various leaders in the OT enabling them to accomplish mighty things for God ... the Spirit of truth who has been the guardian of and dispenser of the Truth for eternity ... this same Spirit then became responsible for “presenting” the One who became Truth in a human body ... Jesus Christ. One of the Holy Spirit’s most important duties was to “present” Jesus to the world. You remember the circumstances of the birth of Jesus:

Matthew 1:18 - His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

When Mary's husband Joseph was confused by this an angel appeared to him and told him not to be afraid.

Matthew 1:20b - "What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

And when Mary was confused about how all of this would happen, the angel said to her...

Luke 1:35 - "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

So you see that the Holy Spirit was instrumental in "presenting" Jesus to the world at His birth. And the Holy Spirit continues to be instrumental in presenting Jesus to the world. That's what Jesus meant when He said in John 15:26, "He will testify (bear witness) about me."

The Holy Spirit's overwhelming responsibility is to make much of Jesus. He was instrumental in bringing Jesus *into* the world and He is instrumental in presenting Jesus *to* the world. And one of the ways He will do that is through Spirit-filled followers of Jesus. Jesus said to His disciples that night after having been with them for three years...

John 15:27 - And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

The word for testify (or witness) in the Greek language is the word from which we get our word "martyr," meaning "one who gives up his or her life for a cause." The tense of the verb Jesus uses here means, "you will continually bear witness to Me." It carries the weight of a command. And they will do it in the power of the Helper whom Jesus sent from the Father to testify about Him. So Jesus' departure from them gives way the Spirit's presence in them. Then everything Jesus said and did is just continued on in what we disciples say and do.

When the Spirit comes to dwell in a believer He comes with the power for effective witnessing. That's what Jesus had in mind when just before His ascension told His followers:

Acts 1:8 - You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

And Acts shows us how for the next thirty years this unstoppable force captured life and after life in nation after nation. The power of the Holy Spirit is not merely for our *enjoyment*; it is for our *employment* in the mission of Jesus. Jesus said, "You will be my *witnesses*" ... the same word Jesus used in John 15:27 when He said, "And you also must testify..."

Jesus said, "You *will* be My witnesses. You *must* testify about Me." Again, the vision Jesus had for His followers never included just sitting in a church service and thinking that's all that was expected of them as disciples. With the help of the Holy Spirit their lives should explode with power as they lived and testified for Jesus.

Jesus said, "You will be *My* witnesses. You must testify about *Me*." That's what a witness is ... someone who just tells what they know.

ILLUSTRATION – Many years ago I was subpoenaed to appear in court as a character witness in a child custody case. It was one of the most intimidating experiences of my life. I was afraid I would say the wrong thing. The attorney calmed me down by saying, "Just tell them what you know about your friend."

And that's what witnessing is. Just tell them what you know about your friend Jesus. Jesus said, "You must testify *for you have been with me*..." The time they spent walking with and listening to Jesus prepared them to be His witnesses. And the Spirit of Jesus dwelling in us makes being with Jesus just as real for us as it was for those first disciples. I have to wonder if our failure to witness for Jesus is because we haven't really spent that much time with Him to where He is real and alive in us.

So how is the Holy Spirit our Helper in our witness for Christ? The Holy Spirit gives ...

1. COURAGE TO SPEAK

There's no other explanation for the transformation that happened for that bunch of spiritual chickens who were hiding away in fear after Jesus' crucifixion. But after the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit of Jesus upon them in power they became so bold. Nothing could stop them. When they were arrested and mistreated they went back and prayed for God to give them more power and more courage, no matter what it cost.

Acts 4:31 - After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

The power of the Holy Spirit in us gives us courage to speak about Jesus Christ to others.

ILLUSTRATION – As I've thought about this it seems that part of the problem for us as American believers is that we are birthed into the Kingdom of God with such ease, humanly speaking and because of that our witness is pretty anemic. Many in our church have been on mission to Romania. They've learned how a generation ago young people were forced by the Communists to study atheism in their schools. The social and cultural pressure to not speak about one's faith was overwhelming. But those young disciples would "gossip the Gospel" even in the face of incredible danger. In the 70s and 80s when American churches were enjoying cultural acceptance and Christians didn't have to live counter-cultural lives, Romanian churches were fighting for their lives. And out of that grew a generation of young people who knew nothing but absolute surrender to Christ ... taking up their cross and following Christ. While in the US we were looking for comfortable Christianity, Romanian young people were taught from the start that it costs everything to follow Jesus. And when you come to Christ in those circumstances you testify with courage about Him.

The coming of Jesus into our lives by the Spirit is a blood transfusion for courageous living. So the Holy Spirit gives us courage. But also the Spirit gives us...

2. WORDS TO SAY

Again, Jesus prepared the disciples for life in a world where following Jesus wasn't popular. And He encouraged them...

Luke 12:11-12 - “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

One of the great works of the Holy Spirit is to present Jesus to the world and He does it through followers of Jesus. And when we get into situations where we’re a little nervous about what to say, Jesus said, “Don’t sweat it. The Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you are to say.” Notice He doesn’t say it will be given in advance. It’s as they are placed in situations where they have the opportunity to speak for Christ that words will be given to them.

Even the great Apostle Paul needed this. He asked the Ephesians believers to pray for him...

Ephesians 6:19 - That whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,

The words are given when we step out on faith and open our mouths to speak. I’ve experienced this more times than I can remember when, in real fear, I have stepped out and spoken up and I hear myself saying words that I know didn’t come from me. I encourage you to trust the Lord in this. He is faithful. The Holy Spirit gives courage to speak, words to say and the ...

3. DIRECTION TO GO

I love the story told in Acts 8 about that deacon and evangelist named Philip and his witness to an Ethiopian official who was on his way home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. An angel of the Lord prompted Philip to take an obscure road that as it turns out just happened to be the road this Ethiopian official was travelling.

Acts 8:29 - The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

The Spirit gave Philip directions as to where He should go. He wasn’t an apostle; he was just an ordinary guy full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. It just so happened that the Ethiopian was reading in His Bible about the prophecies of the Messiah. And God used him to testify about Jesus to a man who ultimately was saved and baptized right there on that remote road. Historians tell us that that Ethiopian went back to his home land and was instrumental in the church being established in Africa.

Be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He is working in the people around you. His job is to testify about Jesus and you're His partner in that. Trust me; I know how intimidating this can be. We talk about the skill of just walking across the room and starting a conversation with someone and watching for how the Lord might move the conversation toward Jesus.

So those are three ways the Spirit works in us as witnesses. The next two are how the Spirit works in the lives of non-believers. Next, the Spirit brings...

4. CONVICTION OF SIN

That's what Jesus promised His followers a little later in John:

John 16:8 - When (the Helper) comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

When we are faithful to love others and proclaim the simple truths of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit drives the truth home with conviction. And the Holy Spirit will carry on that work and bring...

5. CONVERSION TO NEW LIFE

There's power in the proclamation and the message of the Gospel.

Romans 1:16 - I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...

If you're not a follower of Jesus it says that salvation is available to everyone who believes. Trust Him today.

If you're a follower of Jesus remember that successful witnessing is just sharing the Gospel in the love and power of the Holy Spirit. What we read about on the pages of the Bible is not just what God *used* to do. It's what God still *wants* to do, and He still *will* do through followers of Jesus who are completely surrendered and obedient. The equipment they had is the same equipment we have ... the power of the Holy Spirit.