

# The Same but Better

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[ 0 : 00 ] God's Word. Let's pray and ask for His help as we come to His Word. Heavenly Father, we ask that by the power of Your Holy Spirit, you would speak to us now.

Build up our hearts, encourage us. We long to hear You speak. We need to hear You speak. And speak to us now, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Can you think of the most recent situation or time in your life where you thought, I don't know how to keep following Jesus in this?

Now, for some of us this morning, we've maybe never thought that. And I'll loop back around to that later, what it means to follow Jesus. Maybe some of us here don't, and so we've never thought that, and we will get to that.

But for many of us here, when was the last time we thought that? How do I keep following? How do I keep obeying? How do I keep trusting the Lord Jesus and His ways in this time, in these circumstances, in this situation?

[ 1 : 16 ] It could be a trial, which anyone in the world could face, as a result of living in a fallen world. How do I keep following Jesus, lying in this hospital bed, lying next to this hospital bed, when my boss is making life so difficult for me, when my world is a kind of veil of tears, my pillow day and night is soaked, as I cry, as I mourn grief and loss that there's been in my life.

But it could also be that a trial has come because we're a Christian, because we follow Jesus. The arguments around the dinner table, Tuesday evening as we all sit down at six o'clock for food, the arguments there are because we follow Jesus, and someone else in our family doesn't, or doesn't know what it means for us to do it.

Maybe it's because we're left out of a group of friends at university. They know that I follow Jesus and won't go to the parties and do all the things that they do or whatever, and I'm being left out and sidelined and pushed to the side.

Maybe it's pressure at work coming right down on our heads because our bosses or colleagues want us to do something that our jobs allowed, or maybe we could just sort of do it off to the side here, but we know that Christ would never allow us to do that.

How do I keep loving and following Jesus in these crucibles, these difficult times, these valleys, whatever they might be? But when was the last time you asked that? Well, I want you to imagine that place and that time, that season.

[ 2 : 49 ] Be as specific as you can. And I want you to imagine how it would be different if Jesus was physically there. A seat at the dinner table, Tuesday at six o'clock as we all sit down for some food.

Walking beside me, right there with me, into the boss's office. Stood by me, there with me as the sniggering and mocking comes as I follow him.

What would you say? What would you make of that? It would be transformative, wouldn't it? His presence right there, the reassuring look, the hand on the shoulder, the king by my side.

What do you have to say now, world? Well, this is the situation the disciples have been in for three years. We find them here in the upper room on the night of Jesus' betrayal and arrest.

Jesus has just washed their feet. They've just taken the Passover meal together. And back in chapter 13, verse 33, Jesus begins to explain to his disciples he's going.

[ 3 : 53 ] That he's leaving. That his hour has come. It's time for him to be glorified. He's going to the cross. Now, if Jesus is leaving, going to the cross and then raised to the sky, and you've been in every situation with him for three years.

You were there when he turned water into wine. When he healed the man by the pool at Bethsaida on the Sabbath. When he raised Lazarus from the dead. But especially for these disciples, Jesus has been there in times of opposition.

When the teachers of the law, the Pharisees, the scribes, they've come with questions and accusations and trouble. Jesus has always been there. But now he's going to go. And you know that you're going to keep on following him. How are you going to feel? He's always been there. His presence right there. But now, no longer.

How would you feel? Heading out into the world. And Jesus is gone. Well, confused. Unsure. Uncertain. Sorrowful. I think all of those things.

[ 4 : 58 ] In chapter 16, verse 6, Jesus says, sorrow has filled their hearts. He's just spoken of the opposition, the persecution they're going to face. But I think it goes all the way back to 13.

Jesus is leaving. Trouble is coming. And they're sorrowful. And in chapter 14, verse 27, Jesus tells them, do not let your hearts be troubled.

And don't be afraid. Meaning what? We say to someone, don't be troubled. Don't be afraid. If we are afraid. If we are troubled. The disciples here are afraid.

They are troubled of all that is to come for them after this. We feel troubled. And maybe afraid at times in life. Don't we?

If only Jesus was there. So what is Jesus' answer to their trouble? What is Jesus' answer to their sorrow? What is Jesus' answer to their fear of heading out into ministry and life with him, not physically there beside him?

[ 5 : 58 ] But what does he say? We just read it there, 1426. Do not lose heart. Do not lose heart. Do not let your hearts be troubled. That's what he wants for them, to take heart.

So how? How can these disciples, how can God's people going forth from here take heart? How can they not be troubled? Answer?

He's going to send the helper. He's going to send the spirit of truth. He's going to send the Holy Spirit. Now, in setting all this up, in helping them to take heart, Jesus then says something perhaps even more surprising, right?

In 167, and sorry, we're dotting between 14 and 16, and this whole little section, parts of the Holy Spirit, but in 167, Jesus says to them something really surprising, doesn't he?

He actually says to them, not only am I sending the spirit, but it is to their advantage. It is to their advantage that Jesus goes and the spirit comes. It is for their good.

[ 6 : 59 ] Really, Jesus? How? When I see the word advantage there in 16, I sometimes think of a sort of advantage being played on in football. Someone's fouled, the referee says play on, people keep running, they keep going, advantage is played.

How are they going to play on these disciples? How are they going to keep going? How is it better? Well, what does Jesus say at the end of that sentence in 167?

If I don't go, the helper will not come. And so they are to take heart, to be comforted, not filled with sorrow, because the Holy Spirit, the helper, that the paraclete will be sent after Jesus' death and resurrection and exaltation into heaven.

It is to their advantage, because then the spirits will come. And so, friends, that carries for us today, as we seek to love Jesus and follow him, obeying him and living for him, which is the context of all of this back in 1415.

The context of all this talk of the Spirit is Jesus leaving and his disciples keeping loving him and following him. As we seek to love Jesus by following him, he reassures us and would have us take heart that the Spirit is with us.

[ 8 : 19 ] But put another way, put another way. In all the situations we are thinking of sitting here, in all the situations I asked you to imagine, and perhaps for some of us, not only one, right? Multiple situations, multiple times in our lives, troubles and difficulties, because we're following the Lord Jesus.

In that situation where we're thinking, how do I keep following Jesus? And for all that we think, it would be transformed if Jesus was physically there. He says there is something better than that now, surprising though it seems.

And that is that the Spirit is with us. And as we're going to see, not only with us, but in us. And so here, Jesus gives two reasons for his disciples, his followers, to take heart and not be afraid, not to be troubled in our lives, because the Spirit has come.

So two reasons then are two points. We can take heart because the sent Spirit continues the ministry of Jesus. That's our first point. The sent Spirit continues the ministry of Jesus.

Chapter 14, verse 16. Jesus says, I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever. So here's the consolation.

[ 9 : 34 ] Here's the rich streams of mercy for the disciples. They're going to have another helper. So if Jesus says another, the question is, well, who's the first? Well, of course, it's Jesus himself.

So to have another helper means the helper's going to come and have a ministry like Jesus. They can take heart because the ministry of Christ amongst them is going to continue by the work and power of the Spirit that is to come.

When Barcelona Football Club, FC Barcelona, wants someone to come in to be their new manager, they want someone to come in and play to their style, the Cruyff way, tiki-taka football.

They look for another Cruyff, don't they, Cruyff style? Someone after him in that mold. Often you see that in sports, certainly with big sports teams, but it can be true in business or politicians.

Oh, he's a Blairite or a Brownite or a Thatcherite or whatever it is. We want someone in that mold to come and help us do what they did before. And Jesus is saying that that's what the helper will do.

[ 10 : 43 ] He promises that's what he'll do. All that Jesus was there beside them to do on earth, the Spirit will continue to do amongst them as he comes to dwell in them. And so that's how the disciples can take heart.

Christ continues with them by his Spirit. So what are those things? What is the ministry of Christ did as a helper, as an advocate amongst them?

What was that? Well, in view here in 1416 is that word helper. Another helper will come.

Now, the word helper is about as difficult to pin down or translate a meaning or define as the term Scottish summer.

What is a Scottish summer? Well, it can include sun. It can include rain. It can include wind. This week it was thunderstorms. And actually last week for us on Wednesday as I drove through Old Meldrum, it was a whiteout of hailstones, pretty much snow.

[ 11 : 46 ] Okay, so what is a Scottish summer? Well, it's lots of things, okay? Pin it down. Well, this word helper is lots of things. You can twist the diamond a number of ways.

It's the Greek word *paraclete*, meaning called alongside. So helper or guide or comforter or advocate.

Get at something of what Christ did for them and the Spirit will continue to do for them. Think sometimes you go to a difficult meeting at work or you have a difficult time with a friend and sometimes you go to that meeting, formal or informal.

And what you do, you take a friend with you. You take someone alongside you to support you, encourage you. They might even speak up for you. That's the work that Christ did.

That's the work the Spirit will continue to do on earth, coming alongside, comforting, helping, supporting the disciples as Christ did for them.

[ 12 : 49 ] So friends, take heart. It is to our advantage Christ is gone because he has gone to the cross, paid for our sins, he's risen and exalted, seating in heaven, having accomplished full redemption and now sends his Spirit to be with us wherever we are.

Think of it, Christ's body, Christ in his physical body is limited in time and place. But now by his Spirit he can be with all his people in all places to guide them and comfort them and help them. And many of us can attest to the help of the Spirit, can we not? As much as I can ask you to think back or think yourself into a difficult time, can we not also think back into difficult times and seasons and attest to God's faithfulness, to attest to his goodness?

We face, humanly speaking, impossible suffering and pain and grief and heartache and yet we were sustained how the Spirit of God comforted, guided, consoled and kept me.

In the darkest of valleys I could cry out, the Lord is my shepherd because I knew he really was with me by the power of his Spirit. I was speaking to someone even just yesterday in the midst of a very difficult situation but could look back to a similar situation in the past and attest of God's comfort and grace and help and he knew that God would be with him now.

[ 14 : 19 ] I often think another example, I often think of the Scottish minister of the 17th century, Samuel Rutherford, the great Scottish theologian and pastor. We have the Rutherford room here now.

Rutherford was exiled, sent into prison in Aberdeen for preaching and holding views of Presbyterian government but when he came to Aberdeen and was exiled here from Dumfries, Central Belt and Dumfries, when he came to Aberdeen he would write his letters and he would sign them off and say

that he was in the king's palace.

Now he was not in the king's palace, he was in a dungeon, he was in jail, he was suffering. So how is a jail cell a king's palace?

How? How? The spirit of God kept him and comforted him and guided him. So friends, take heart this morning. God has sent an advocate, a helper who will draw near to you and is with you and as we're going to see in a minute, in us, dwelling in us and will lead you and keep you as Christ would in our lives.

Which brings us to another part of the spirit's work. The spirit doesn't only comfort and draw alongside us. Another part of that is that the spirit will teach us. Verse 26 there of chapter 14.

[15:43] The helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all I have said to you. And in chapter 16, verse 12 as well, Jesus says this, I still have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now.

When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth for he will not speak on his own authority but whatever he hears, he will speak and declare it to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, he will take what is mine and declare it to you. So why does the spirit also have this teaching ministry? Well, it's a real kindness of Christ, isn't it?

Chapter 14, 26, the disciples, the apostles are going to be sent out, they're going to need help to remember. Chapter 16, verse 12, there are things that they cannot bear now.

There are things that the Lord Jesus still needs to teach them after the grief and sorrow that's in their hearts has gone. Only later will they see them clearly.

[16:48] Now, it might seem strange for us to hear that the spirit will guide them into all truth. Does that mean he'll teach things that are other than what Christ would have said?

Well, no, not at all. Jesus leaves us in no doubt that this teaching ministry of the spirit is Christ teaching. Verse 13, he cannot speak in his own authority. What he hears, he'll speak.

He will glorify me and declare what is mine and declare it to you. And so here we see, don't we, gloriously in John kind of all the persons of the Trinity at work.

The Father sends the spirit in Jesus' name. The spirit speaks what Christ says. And as John has also told us, what Christ speaks is nothing other than what the Father has given to him to say.

That the spirit is called twice here in these passages, the spirit of truth. And Jesus has just said, John 14, 16, that he is the way, the truth, and the life.

[17:46] So the spirit of truth is always going to point back to the truth, Jesus Christ. So what does that all mean for us? It means first that we should reject and walk away from anyone who says the spirit is teaching me X, Y, or Z, whatever those things are, if it's in contradiction to what God says.

And where does God speak? In his word, the Bible. It is not unheard of. And I've seen it in this country, men and women in dog collars, standing in church meetings, preaching in pulpits, saying, the spirit now tells us this, when very, very clearly the Bible says that, the complete opposite, that the spirit will never contradict Christ, never contradict the word of God, for he's from God and for the glory of God.

Never let or listen to cover your ears if anyone would seek to put a wedge or put daylight between Christ and his spirit, between the word of God and the spirit of God.

No, they belong absolutely together. But second, it should give us encouragement. It should help us to take heart. Now, of course, this promise is firstly to the apostles as they go and preach and as some of them write letters and gospels that are the scriptures of the New Testament.

But it does also come to us that as we read the Bible, as we speak of Christ, that the spirit is working to draw people to Jesus. If you were at Life Group this past Wednesday, it's exactly what we were thinking about then, that the word of God and the spirit of God go together, that the spirit is working in our lives through his word.

[19:37] So, friends, think back to that difficult situation, those difficult situations at the start. What does this say to that? It says, keep coming back to God's word, trusting that the spirit will be teaching us, encouraging us, helping us to live for Jesus whatever we are facing.

As Steve prayed earlier, yes, we're so prone to forget, but God in his kindness has sent his spirit to remind us, to bring us to his word, to help us and encourage us.

So, friends, take heart. The helper, the spirit of truth continues Jesus' ministry as an advocate, as a helper, as a guide, and as one who will teach us as well.

Secondly, then, and our second point, we can take heart because the helper dwells in us. Jesus tells them that at the end of chapter 14, verse 17, doesn't he?

The helper will be with you and in you. He goes on in verse 18 to say, I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.

[ 20 : 45 ] Well, how will Jesus come in the context of what he's saying in these verses? It is in the context of the spirit who dwells in us. And we hear it again in verse 23 of chapter 14.

If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Let me just note a couple of things about this for us. first, not everyone has the spirit. Verse 17, what does Jesus say? The world cannot receive him.

The implication of what Jesus has just said is that, well, if we don't love Christ, we don't know the Father through Christ, then we will not receive the spirit.

So friends, let me look right back to the start. if you've never asked yourself, how do I follow Jesus in this? Well, because I'm not a Christian. I actually don't love Jesus.

[ 21 : 45 ] I don't know Jesus. Well, I've got a prayer for you. I've got something that I think you should pray and say because you don't have the spirit. Two prayers actually for you, for anyone here who's not a Christian or for any of us who have friends or family that aren't Christian.

Two things to pray. Firstly, the end of verse 20, sorry, the end of verse 17, sorry, no, the end of verse 27, Jesus says the spirit can't be received because people do not see him or know him.

So pray that you can for you or for friends, pray that you will have your eyes open to see and to know God.

Now, what do we need for that? Well, here's a second thing to pray. Jesus says in chapter 16, verse 8, when the spirit comes, he will judge the world in sin and righteousness and judgment.

And so, friends, if you don't know the Lord Jesus or you know someone that doesn't, pray that God will convict them by their spirit of their sin, of the righteousness of Christ and of the world to come.

[ 23 : 01 ] If you don't know God, if you know someone that doesn't, pray that for yourself, pray that for them, that God would convict them of their sin, would convict them, show them who Jesus is, and that you will be brought to life.

But for those of us who do know and follow the Lord Jesus, I want us to notice in these verses in John 14 that we read just how familial the language is, how close God is to us through his spirit, and what comfort there is for us.

What does Jesus say? In the coming of the Spirit, we're not left as orphans. Jesus says, we, that the Father and Son, will make our home, home in a believer.

It doesn't get closer than that, does it? The Spirit coming means we're not orphans, but sons united to Christ and brought to the Father. It's glorious.

J.I. Packer, the great godly pastor, theologian, writes that our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our understanding of adoption. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our understanding of adoption.

[ 24 : 12 ] That we've been brought into God's family, we are not orphans, and that God has made his home with us. That God has brought rebel, sinful people and adopted us as sons through the death of Christ on the cross.

The creator of the sun and moon and stars and all life on earth is now to us Father. Father. And we're going to think a bit more about that in the coming Sundays, but I do just want to say this, dear friends, take heart.

Take heart as you head out into the afternoon, into this week, into that situation which feels almost unbearable, the conversations we're dreading. Your Father is with you.

He's with you. The Spirit is within you. You are not an orphan, you are not alone in this world. God is with you. And not only is your Father with you, by the Spirit and in you, verse 23, he loves you.

For those who follow the Lord Jesus and love him, your Father loves you. Oh, how much of our Christian life would be transformed if we basked in the knowledge of the love of God for us.

[ 25 : 22 ] God loves us and is in us and with us wherever we go. So, dear friends, remember that love. Rejoice in his presence with us. We are royal children.

If we know the Lord Jesus heading out into this week, we are royal children heading into our Father's world bearing the name of Jesus and he is with us by his Spirit. Think of a child on that first day at school, that reassurance that's needed.

Dad's there, mum's there, whoever it is. My family are there holding my hand. They love me. They're for me. Friends, we have that every day.

Not just the first day of school, but every day. We have that, friends, by the power of the Spirit who dwells in us. And how long do we have it for? How long?

Chapter 14, verse 16, the helper is with us forever, forever. Friends, there is no day, there is no day, there is no season of life, there is no pit too deep of grief, no mountaintop of joy too high where God with his Spirit is not with us and dwelling in us, made our home with us.

[ 26 : 32 ] So, friends, as we close, think yourself into the week ahead or think yourself back into difficult seasons of life. So, yes, for all it would be quite something for the physical presence of Jesus to be with us in our moments of need.

The Lord Jesus says, actually you have something now to your advantage, something to your advantage, the Spirit of Christ. So, friends, take heart. God, by his Spirit, is there with you. He will comfort you, guide you, help you, teach you, and is dwelling inside of you. You are not an orphan left alone in this world. God, your Father, is right there and he'll give you all that you need as you seek to follow him.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for these great words and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, that it is to our advantage that Christ would go, that he would accomplish full redemption and that in his exaltation into heaven he would pour out his Spirit.

We thank you that you have sent your Spirit and that by the work of your Spirit in our lives we are indeed comforted and helped and taught as we seek to live for you. Lord, some of us here are facing very, very challenging situations in our lives, things where we don't quite know what to do and so we pray that by your Spirit you would walk with us, comfort us, guide us, teach us and may we know in all those situations we are not left as orphans but indeed you have taken up home inside us, that we belong in your family, in your courts, in your presence and that you are always with us.

[ 28 : 17 ] Give us assurance and comfort and help us to take heart knowing the closeness of you, our great God and Savior. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.