

Why You Need the 'Other Helper'

We ought to appreciate much more this great gift from God!

What if Jesus were still on earth today as He was nearly 2,000 years ago? What if you lived near Him, saw Him frequently, had personal contact with Him? Wouldn't your life as a Christian seem a lot easier?

Have a tough decision to make? Next time you see Jesus you could ask His counsel. Downcast? Just being with Jesus would inspire you. Sick? Jesus could speak the word and you would be well. Puzzled about some verse in the Scriptures? Jesus could explain it. Have some other problem? Jesus would be right there.

All this from a Savior you could see and touch, as well as hear and talk to.

Yes, some may wish it were that way now.

But it is not. Instead, Jesus has left the earth. "I leave the world and go to the Father," He announced at the close of His ministry as a human (John 16:28). "I go away to Him who sent Me," He declared (verse 5).

He is gone. We now worship and serve a God who is not visible to us.

When we finish praying to Him, there is silence. We may have to wait for an answer to our prayers — perhaps even wait for a long time. We may be tempted to doubt whether our prayers have been heard, whether God cares, whether He still intervenes today, whether this, whether that.

All this tests our faith in a way it could not be tested if Jesus were bodily here among us. All this is for a purpose.

The first chapter of Acts de-

scribes how Jesus ascended into heaven, leaving His disciples — His Church — behind. He had told them, "I go to My Father and you see Me no more" (John 16:10).

Too bad for us? To the contrary! We are better off. Jesus Himself said so!

Read it in John 16:7. Jesus told His disciples, "It is to your advantage that I go away."

Our advantage? What did He mean by that? How could it be to our advantage that He left? Read on: "For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you."

A Helper? Why is it to our advantage that Jesus went away to send a Helper to us?

The other Helper

When He was here on earth, Jesus was a limitless source of strength, inspiration and instruction to those who were with Him daily. He was a true Helper to them in every sense of the word.

But He dwelt with them only a short while, after which He declared, "I go to My Father." He quickly added, however, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper" (John 14:12, 16). This other Helper, to remain forever with converted Christians, is the Holy Spirit — the "Spirit of truth" (verse 17).

Before Jesus left, He told His disciples "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). That was another reference to the Holy Spirit. The momentous occasion when the Holy Spirit was sent was the day of Pentecost in A.D. 31. For

the first time, the Holy Spirit was made available to more than a few individuals.

Accompanied by miraculous signs, the arrival of the Holy Spirit inaugurated the New Testament Church age (Acts 2). Peter explained to the assembled crowd witnessing this marvel that Jesus, "being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear" (verse 33).

How God can be with us now

Jesus did not desert His followers. He didn't forsake them. Not at all. He told them, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

"I will not leave you orphans," He proclaimed. He promised: "I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me" (John 14:18-19).

Further, Christ stated that if a person truly loves and obeys Him, "I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (verse 21), and both Jesus and the Father "will come to him and make Our home with him" (verse 23).

How are we to understand this? Didn't Jesus say in this same discourse that He was leaving and that His disciples would see Him no longer (John 16:10)?

But Jesus explained in John 14:25-26 that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name to teach Jesus' disciples all things. It is through the Holy Spirit — the other Helper — that God is now with us! We see Him not with our physical eyesight, but with the eye of faith.

The apostle Paul referred to this truth when he wrote that being "absent from the Lord," as we now are, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:6-7).

But we have to build that faith. We have to seek God daily. We have to study His Word. We have to spend sufficient time in prayer. We must resist Satan, defeat doubt, overcome ourselves and the world,

keep our minds centered on God.

The Christian life is a struggle, especially in today's world. We need all the help we can get!

A different mind

We have all been ruled by our natural minds. The human mind, which the Bible sometimes refers to as the "heart," is subject to selfish desires and passions.

It is in these minds of ours that we make decisions and determine courses of action. Our physical bodies just act or react accordingly. God is not interested in eternally saving our mortal bodies. Salvation centers around the mind, the human spirit. Once that is in order, God can supply an immortal, spirit-composed body in a resurrection.

The capacity of the human mind to make decisions and judgments is called free moral agency. It is a God-given ability that every person has. The crucial question is, though, By which guidelines or standards do we make our decisions? On what do we base them? Feelings? Prejudices? Lusts? Peer pressure? Or, on the other hand, God's laws?

This is why you need the Holy Spirit. Your natural mind must give way to a spiritual mind. You must be "transformed [converted — how?] by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). "For to be carnally minded [which we all have been] is death, but to be spiritually minded [which we must become] is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

At the beginning of our conversion, God gives us His Holy Spirit, renewing our minds and beginning our growth into a new creation.

A converted person actually has two minds: the natural, fleshly mind and the spiritual mind. These two are in constant conflict with each other (Galatians 5:17). We are supposed to be subduing, stamping out, putting to death the carnal mind (Colossians 3:5, Galatians 5:24) and letting the spiritual mind flourish, increase and grow.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," Paul urged (Philippians 2:5).

We can't accomplish this on our

own. We need the constant "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:9). This is the Helper He promised. This is how He lives in us (I John 3:24).

Christ in us

As one person here on earth, Jesus could directly influence only those immediately around Him. And even those, His disciples, with whom He had continual contact for 3 years were, at the end of those years, still unconverted.

Why? He was in their midst. True. But He was not in them! And that makes all the difference. For you to receive salvation, Christ must be formed in you (Galatians 4:19). "Christ in you [is] the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

The Holy Spirit is part of God (II Corinthians 3:17). That is how Jesus, while still in heaven, "absent" from us, can come and dwell in humans anywhere on earth, through the Holy Spirit, changing them, converting them. If you have the Holy Spirit, God is working in you.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God wanted them "to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19).

To be filled with all the fullness of God should be the goal of every Christian. It doesn't happen all at once. It is a process. We should be striving to reach "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Those who are yielding to Jesus Christ, letting Him direct their decision-making processes, allowing His mind to replace their own natural mind, "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Corinthians 3:18).

By the end of this physical life, Christ's character will be formed in them so that in the resurrection they can be given a spiritual body and become children of God (I John 3:2).

Taking on the divine nature

The "works of the flesh," listed in Galatians 5:19-21, make up the carnal mind that all humans have to one degree or another. No part of that mind will carry over into eternity. Only that in us that reflects the fruit of the Spirit (verses 22-23) is going to live forever.

It behooves us, therefore, to become as filled with the Holy Spirit and produce as much of the fruit of the Spirit as we possibly can during this brief existence.

We need to put forth more effort to be "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4). Consider the characteristics of the divine nature mentioned in verses 5-7: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love. To what degree are these characteristics in you?

Seek them. Strive for them. Study and pray to attain them. Let Jesus Christ, through the other Helper, come and live in you, filling you with these eternal, God-like traits.

"For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 8). You will, instead, be prepared to receive immortality!

"For he who lacks these things is shortsighted...Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure...for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (verses 9-11).

The precious gift

The Holy Spirit is not just a sentiment or a vague spiritual analogy. It is a literal, all-powerful part of God. Consider just some of the advantages that are ours through this precious gift Jesus sends us from the Father:

The Holy Spirit makes us God's children (Romans 8:15), gives us access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18) and increases the effectiveness of our prayers (Romans 8:26, Ephesians 6:18).

The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom, knowledge and understanding (Ephesians 1:17, Isaiah 11:2); imparts to us power, love and a sound mind (II Timothy 1:7); helps us obey God's laws (Ezekiel 36:27) and fills us with the fruit of righteousness (Galatians 5:22-23).

When we are going through our heaviest trials we can know that God is right there by our side. Through the Holy Spirit, God is "a very present help in trouble" (Psalm

46:1).

Yes, it is true that we do not now see and hear Jesus with our physical senses. We do not have Him dwelling bodily with us. We are now absent from Him. We in this Church age have a unique opportunity to build faith.

But when it gets right down to it, whether or not we now have direct physical access to Jesus is not what matters. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, whether we are now present

with Him or absent from Him is not important. What is important is that "we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him" (II Corinthians 5:9).

Be thankful for your calling in Christ, and for the other Helper, given to you as a guarantee of your eternal inheritance in God's Kingdom (verses 4-5).

Article by Clayton D. Steep from the May/June 1989, Good News.

