

# LESSON 292

## THE COMFORTER

Related Scripture: John 16:16-33

**KEY VERSE:** *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*—John 14:26.

Lesson Scripture: John 16:4-15

### Introduction:

Of the multitude of books that have been published on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, very few are worth either the paper and ink used in producing them or the time wasted in reading them. Yet the Holy Spirit is God, and it is only through Him that we can come to know God the Son, just as it is only through the Son that we can come to know God the Father. (Mat. 11:27; I Cor. 2:11.)

Only one book in all the world can be absolutely trusted to tell us the truth about God in every detail that He has been pleased to reveal, and that is His Book, the Bible. Human imagination, human experience, and human interpretation can be very misleading, especially because of the deceptive work of the devil. This ancient and powerful enemy of our souls misuses and misinterprets even fragments of the word of God to give us false ideas about God. Let us remember that "the scripture cannot be broken" (Jn. 10:35); the whole Bible, taken as a whole, is dependable; we must reject any interpretation that would introduce a contradiction into the word of the God that cannot lie.

To the Bible, then, we must go for a true knowledge of the Holy Spirit. This week's lesson is taken from the words of Jesus Himself as He told His first disciples of His own approaching death and of the coming of the Holy Spirit as "another Comforter" (Jn. 14:16). May the same Spirit Who directed His words direct our understanding of Himself.

Possibly the following outline may be helpful:

1. Comforting Savior, John 16:4, 5
2. Comfort in Sorrow, John 16:6
3. Comforter Sent, John 16:7
4. Convicting Spirit, John 16:8-11
  - a. Reproofs enumerated, 8
  - b. Reproofs explained, 9-11
5. Comforting Spirit, John 16:12-15
  - a. Timely Guide, 12
  - b. Truthful Guide, 13
  - c. Trustworthy Guide, 14, 15

### Notes on the Printed Text:

#### Comforting Savior, John 16:4, 5

As He neared the time of His sufferings and death on the cross, Jesus devoted Himself to comforting His disciples. He knew perfectly well the awful punishment he faced as God's chosen Substitute for sinners, but we hear no word of complaint. Rather, He was concerned that His disciples should have some understanding of what was about to take place, if not before then after the event.

Verse 5 might be taken as words of reproof, but Jesus wanted His disciples to think of things beyond death. Alas—do we not still worry too much about death and think too little of what is beyond?

#### Comfort in Sorrow, John 16:6.

Sorrow is often appropriate enough in this world, but we should not permit our hearts to be so filled with sorrow that there is no room for joy and thanksgiving. We are not to sorrow "as others which have no hope." (I Thes. 4:13.) Christ Himself was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3); yet "for the joy that was set before him" He "endured the cross, despising the shame." (He. 12:2.) For those who know and love God, there is joy and comfort in the midst of sorrow.

#### Comforter Sent, John 16:7.

While Jesus remained on earth, His disciples could enjoy His bodily presence in only one place at a time. We can be sure that they did not understand until later how it could be expedient or profitable to them for Him to depart; but, as always, He told them the truth; the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, sent to represent Him, is not subject to physical limitations.

#### Convicting Spirit, John 16:8-11.

"Reprove" could be rendered "convict" or "convince," as in John 8:9 and 46, where the same Greek word is used. This reproofing or convicting is the great work of the Holy Spirit in the world at large.

#### Reproofs Enumerated, 8.

Jesus listed here three great facts of life which are much neglected and even denied in this world: sin, righteousness, and judgment. Ignoring or denying the facts, however, cannot change them; and it is the Holy Spirit's work to convince men concerning these facts.

#### Reproofs Explained, 9-11.

Now, the sin of which the Spirit convicts is the sin of unbelief. Men generally admit the wrongness of other sins, such as various kinds of immorality; but only the Holy Spirit can convince them that they are wicked to disbelieve in Jesus.

Righteousness was demonstrated in the life of Jesus while He was here on earth, but since His return to the Father one work of the Holy Spirit is to convince men of this fact: the righteousness which God requires is the perfect righteousness of His Son, exemplified in His life and freely given for us through faith in His death on the cross.

Judgment must come even upon Satan, the "prince of this world"; much more must his dupes and slaves pay the price of their rebellion against God. Lying spirits or demons try to convince sinners that there is no hell or everlasting punishment; the Holy Spirit brings conviction of the judgment of God according to the plain teaching of His word.

**Comforting Spirit, John 16:12-15.**

More enjoyable to us is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His people; the work of helping, teaching, guiding, and empowering us; the work suggested by His name, the Comforter.

**Timely Guide, 12.**

God is the best of all teachers. He creates within us the desire to learn and the ability to bear knowledge before teaching us. Sometimes it seems that some of His people (or at least some people) by secondhand means get hold of more truth than they can bear, but they will be able to bear it when they learn it from Him. The Holy Spirit is a timely Guide, always opening up new vistas of truth just when He has prepared us to appreciate what we see.

**Truthful Guide, 13.**

Evil spirits lead and teach contrary to God's word, but the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and always guides into truth, not out of truth. He always tells us the truth, passing on to us what He hears from the Father and the Son. He has shown us things to come, not only in the book of Revelation but also in other prophecies of the New Testament. Those would-be prophets of later years whose "prophecies" have proved to be untrue did not get their ideas from the Holy Spirit.

**Trustworthy Guide, 14, 15.**

Certainly the extreme emphasis among some people on the supposed miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit is grossly misplaced, to say the least. His genuine and principal work is to glorify Christ, not Himself. Nor does this mean a mere parroting of names and titles of Jesus, combined with false teachings which practically deny His true character. The Holy Spirit shows to us the things of Christ precisely as they are set forth in the Bible—the whole Bible.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (I Jn. 4:1.)

**Key Verse:**

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John 14:26.

Since there are some uninformed persons who try to make a distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost, it may be well to point out that there is no such distinction in the Bible: "Spirit" and "Ghost" are alternative translations of the same Greek word. Also we may note that here Jesus said the Spirit would be sent by the Father, while in John 16:7 He was to be sent by the Son. Therefore Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were in agreement on His coming to indwell His people individually and His church corporately. There is no conflict of purpose in the Trinity.

Teaching the early disciples (and us— I Jn. 2:27) all the things that God wants us to know, and reminding the apostles of all that Jesus had said to them, the Holy Spirit completed the revelation of God to us through His written word. All His teaching now, since He is the Spirit of truth, must be in perfect agreement with that word.