**Foundations (33 of 60) The Paraclete - RC Sproul**

Before ascending into heaven, Christ promised His followers He'd send the Paraclete. We'll discuss the role of the Holy Spirit next on Renewing Your Mind. Welcome to Renewing Your Mind, the radio outreach of the Ligonier Ministries, with Dr. R.C. Sproul.

Today we continue our series titled Foundations, an overview of systematic theology, with a detailed look at the person Jesus called the Paraclete. We're talking, of course, about the Holy Spirit, and specifically His role as our Comforter and Helper in the midst of a hostile world. And at the end of this lesson, we'll explain how you can own a copy of today's presentation, as well as the complete 60-part Foundation series on DVD.

Here's the founder and chairman of Ligonier Ministries, Dr. R.C. Sproul. In the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus has a discussion of several things, but one of the central points that He discusses in this discourse is hate. That may seem strange to us, because we're accustomed to thinking of the centrality of love in the teaching of Jesus, and certainly in the Gospel of John.

But in the fifteenth chapter, Jesus is talking about the hatred that the world had for Him. And as a consequence of that hatred that the world expressed toward Jesus, Jesus now in this upper room discourse is alerting His disciples to what they may expect from the world. He's saying, if the world hated Me, then obviously they're going to hate you.

And in this discourse, He says this in verse 18, "...if the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. And if you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but that I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." And then He goes on to speak about persecution.

And in the midst of that discourse, He introduces a very important theme, and that is the theme of the promised Comforter whom He will send to be with His people in the midst of a hostile world. Now the question that I often ask my seminary students, and to see how well versed they are in Scripture, I'll ask those of you who are listening today, who is the paraclete? We see this word sometimes in Christian literature, the paraclete. Who is the paraclete? That's the question I ask my seminary students, I ask the audience here today, can anybody tell me who the paraclete is? The Holy Spirit.

I knew you were going to say the Holy Spirit, but that's wrong. Thanks for playing. Well it's not altogether wrong, but when we think of this title, paraclete, we almost always think immediately of the Holy Spirit, because that is the title that we give to the Holy Spirit.

But the little correction that I want to make is this, that when Christ introduces the paraclete, He says to His people, I am going to send you another paraclete. And so really, the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is introduced as another paraclete. Now obviously, for there to be another paraclete, there must be at least one previous paraclete in order for there to be another one.

And when we look at the New Testament in the Greek word parakletos, which is transliterated over to the English word paraclete, we see that that title, paraclete, belongs in the first instance not to the Holy Spirit, but to Jesus Himself. It is Jesus in the New Testament reveals as the paraclete. And then the Holy Spirit is the second paraclete or another paraclete alongside of Jesus.

Now I'm going over this little word study not just for fun, but because there's great significance to this, particularly in understanding the meaning of this, not only as it is related to Jesus, but also as it relates to the person and the work of the Holy Spirit. Let me, before I do that, go back to this fifteenth chapter of John. In verse 25, Jesus says, but this happened that the word might be fulfilled which was written in their law, they hated Me without a cause.

But when the Helper comes, that's the translation I'm reading, other translations read, when the Counselor comes, and the old translation read, when the Comforter comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness because you have been with Me from the beginning. Now these things I've spoken to you that you should not be made to stumble.

They will put you out of the synagogues. Yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.

But these things I have told you that when the time comes you may remember that I told you. Now again, we see that the setting for Jesus' discussion about the sending of the Comforter, the sending of the Holy Spirit is in the context of hatred and anticipated persecution. Now historically in the church, this idea of the paraclete in terms of the ministry of the Holy Spirit has been associated with comfort because we also use the title Comforter with respect to the Holy Spirit.

And here is an aspect in which we miss something significant about the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. I think for a moment of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who in the nineteenth century, as you know, declared the death of God. But Nietzsche was quite critical of the impact of Christianity on Western civilization.

He said that God is dead, He died of pity. And what Nietzsche abhorred was the ethic that he considered an ethic of weakness that had been propagated by the Christian church in Western Europe, emphasizing humility and patience and kindness when he says, true and authentic humanity is found in the superman who expresses the will to power. And an authentic person is one, Nietzsche said, who in the final analysis is a conqueror.

He doesn't cave in to this ethic of weakness and meekness, but rather he called for an ethic of strength, machismo and all of that sort of thing. And again with the ideal being found with the image of the conqueror. There's reason why Adolf Hitler passed out copies of Nietzsche's books to his henchmen as Christmas presents before his rise to power in Germany.

Now, the fascinating thing to me is that when Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as another paraclete, another comforter, that this concept has been vastly misunderstood in our culture. When we think of somebody who brings comfort, we think of one who ministers to us in the midst of our pain, somebody who will dry the tears from our eyes and give consolation to us when we are disquieted or downcast. Now, when Jesus calls the Holy Spirit another comforter or paraclete, that's not what He's talking about.

Now, lest I be misunderstood, let me hasten to add that the New Testament does teach that God is One who brings consolation to His people. In fact, the birth of Christ was heralded as the appearance of the consolation of Israel. And so, I do not mean to suggest that God is not there or that the Holy Spirit Himself does not come and minister to us in the midst of our pain and in the midst of affliction.

He does do all of these things. He's the One who gives us the peace that passes understanding. But that's not the reference that Jesus is making here.

The term paracletos, the Greek word, comes from the Greek culture. And in the first instance, we can examine the Greek. I'll just do it with the English version.

The prefix para means alongside of. We think of paraministries, paralegals, paramedics, whatever. Somebody or something that is para is that which is alongside something else.

One of the most famous words that we get in the Bible is the word parable, which comes from the preface para and the root baleo, which means to throw. And so, a parable is something that is thrown alongside of something else. When Jesus wants to illustrate a point that He's making, He'll throw alongside of it this little story that illustrates it.

Now, here we have the word paracletos, which comes from the verb kaleo, which means to call. So literally, the word comes from the concept of someone who is called to come alongside of somebody else. Now, the way that worked in the Greek culture was that a paraclete was a family attorney, who whenever there was trouble brewing and you needed somebody to defend you in the midst of a struggle, you called your paraclete, who was usually on a permanent retainer.

He was the family attorney. He came to defend you in the midst of accusations that you were to endure. And so, that's the idea in the ancient Greek world.

The paraclete is the defender, the strengthener, who is there to assist you in the time of trouble. Now, one of the things that's always amazed me is that the same Greek word is used by John in his epistles that he uses here in his gospel, but the old translators, when they would come to paracletos in John's letters, they didn't translate it as comforter or helper. They translated it as advocate.

If anyone sins, remember that we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous. Well, in the Greek, we have a paracletos. We have a paraclete.

And there's where I say Christ is the original paraclete, but we don't think of Him in that regard, but we do understand because of the older translations that Jesus is called our advocate. Now, what is an advocate? An advocate in the English language originally had specific reference to an attorney. An attorney was somebody who would advocate somebody's case for them.

And that is the imagery that we find in the New Testament with respect to Jesus. And I've said before, one of the things that amazes me and thrills my soul is that Jesus talks about our standing at the judgment seat of God at the end of our lives where Christ Himself will be the judge of the living and the dead, and God has appointed Christ to be the judge of the earth, and yet He also serves as our advocate. It doesn't get any better than that.

When we go on trial before Almighty God, Christ will be sitting on the bench as the judge. We'll walk into the courtroom, and we'll discover that our defense attorney is the presiding judge, and that's really neat when you have that working for you. But in any case, Jesus Christ is our advocate or our paraclete who will defend us before the Father.

But we not only need a defense before the Father. We need a defense before a hostile world, and Jesus, in the midst of this discussion about hatred and the persecution and affliction, He says to His disciples, I'll be dragging you before the councils and everything. Don't worry about what you have to say at that time.

It will be given to you in that hour. Why? Because I'm sending you another advocate. I'm sending you your paraclete.

Your family attorney who is there on permanent retainer. I'm sending you the Holy Spirit. Well, obviously, you can see the difference between a work wherein the Holy Spirit stands beside us to encourage us, to defend us, and to strengthen us in the heat of the battle, the difference between that image and the image of the Holy Spirit who comes to us after the battle when we're there brutalized and broken, and we're all beat up, and He comes and consoles us.

That's a whole different image. The image of the Comforter is not the image of one who comes to dry away our tears after the battle, but who comes to give us strength and courage for the battle. Now why, then, does He call it the Comforter? Well, again, this is one of these little glitches of the development of language.

Language undergoes small changes and progress and evolution as time passes. We take that word comfort or Comforter, and we go back to the Elizabethan era, and we see that at that time in English history, the word Comforter was much more closely related to its Latin roots than it is today in current usage. The word comfort, again, comes from two Latin words, cum, which means with, cum forte, with forte.

Now, what does forte, where do you ever see that word? If you've ever played any music or played the piano, you remember that the name of the instrument, piano, is already an abbreviated name for that instrument, which was originally called a pianoforte. Why? Because in the technology of building musical instruments, what made the piano differ from the harpsichord was it had a dynamic in the instrument whereby you could adjust how loud the instrument played. You play the key softly, it's soft.

You play them hard, demonstratively, then it gets loud, okay? And so if you read music, you'll see the directions for the playing of an instrumental piece. You may see a little P by the portion in the bar of music, and that indicates that it's to be played soft. You may see a double P, which means really soft, or you may see an F, which means you play it loudly or more strongly, and you get that double F, and you're banging on the keys at that point.

So the pianoforte means soft and loud, or soft and strong, and I may say to you, what is your forte, which means what is your strength, what is your strong suit. Well, that's what in the original meaning of this term, the word comfort meant literally with strength, not consolation. And so the point is that the reason why the old text called the periclete the comforter was Jesus said, when you are faced with all of the adversity of this hostility and hatred of this world, don't be discouraged because I'm going to send one to be in your presence, and he will come to you with strength.

And that's the primary work of the Holy Spirit here, to come to strengthen God's people to be courageous in the midst of fearful tribulation. I think, for example, of Paul's statement that in Christ we are more than conquerors. Hupernikon is the Greek there, that is super, in fact in the Latin is super vincimus.

We are super conquerors. And I think of Nietzsche when I read that, and I said, Nietzsche, you want conquerors? All right, we'll give you conquerors. The conquerors that are developed by God the Holy Spirit who strengthens His people, and one of the key ways in which He strengthens us for confrontation with the world is with truth.

Because we see in this same discourse that Jesus says, I will send you the Comforter, the Paraclete, who is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father. And then later on, He says in verse 12 of chapter 16, I still have many things to say to you, but you can't bear them now. However, when He, again, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will tell you things to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine, therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. So again, we see that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to apply the work of Christ to His people, and He does this by sanctifying us, by revealing the truth of God to us, and by coming to us in strength.

I think that this discourse is an extremely important discourse in the New Testament. John chapter 14, 15, 16, and 17, which we call the Upper Room Discourse. This is that final teaching session that Jesus has with His disciples on the night in which He's betrayed, on the eve of His execution.

And it's also significant, beloved, that in this four chapters that John gives us, we get more information about the person and work of God the Holy Spirit than we get in the rest of the New Testament combined. This is an amazingly important section of Scripture to instruct us about the character of the Holy Ghost and of the mission of the Holy Ghost. And it comes at a time when Jesus is preparing His disciples for His imminent departure, and He's ministering to them in their fear.

Yet a little while, and I'm going away. I won't be with you anymore, but I'm not going to leave you comfortless. That is, I'm not going to leave you without strength.

They had been strengthened by His presence. They had been encouraged by His presence, as you can imagine. But now their leader is going to be removed from them, and He said, it's all right, because when I go, I will send another Strengthener to you, another Paraclete, who will be with you to speak truth for you, and He will encourage you, He will defend you, and He will cause you to be faithful to Me in the midst of trouble.

And He did just that on the day of Pentecost, when He sent the Holy Ghost to His church, to His people, to empower them, to encourage them. And when the persecution came, the Church of Christ blossomed in antiquity, because these were people who were consciously aware of the strength that Christ had given them to stand against the hostile world. The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian is just one portion of our ongoing study of Systematic Theology on Renewing Your Mind with Dr. R.C. Sproul.

Today's program is featured one of 60 lessons in the complete study titled Foundations, an overview of Systematic Theology. The messages cover subjects like miracles, grace, the character of God, and much more. And on the next few weekend programs, we'll cover the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

But you're invited to contact the ministry and request all 60 lessons right now. They're on DVD and yours when you give a donation of any amount to support the ministry. Be sure to mention that you'd like to receive the DVD series called Foundations, an overview of Systematic Theology when you call 1-800-435-4343.

By the way, when you request the DVDs, you'll also receive all 60 lessons on CD so that you can hear Dr. Sproul's messages while commuting in your car or listening on your mobile device. And the bonus CD ROM contains a complete study guide that you can either print out or view on your computer. Again, call 1-800-435-4343 or go online to rymoffer.com. This webpage is for today's special offer only.

Dr. Sproul is the founder of Ligonier Ministries, a teaching fellowship dedicated to helping Christians understand what they believe, why they believe it, how to live it, and how to share it. And this current series is certainly consistent with our mission, providing a means for believers to gain a helpful overview of Systematic Theology. Again, call 1-800-435-4343.

As for the DVD series Foundations, an overview of Systematic Theology, if it's more convenient for you, just go online to the special resource page at rymoffer.com. R-Y-M, of course, stands for Renewing Your Mind. In the event you have more time to relax and browse the Internet over the weekend, be sure to stop by and visit the community of friends who follow us on Facebook. You'll appreciate the conversations taking place online.

And when you like our page at Facebook.com slash Ligonier, it's possible your personal endorsement of this ministry will lead someone to the life-changing truth of God's holiness as revealed in His Word. When someone refers to being baptized in the Holy Spirit, what does that mean? Next weekend on Renewing Your Mind, R.C. Sproul continues this overview of Systematic Theology by defining this important role of the Holy Spirit. Meet us here again next weekend on Renewing Your Mind, the radio outreach of Ligonier Ministries in Sanford, Florida.