

Thursday, May 28, 2026

The Holy Spirit as Comforter

Acts 11:24-25

As you enter your time with God today, take a moment to quiet your mind. Breathe this prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus, come. Fill me with your Spirit. Open my heart that you might share your words of life with me."

We read today from Acts 11:24-25. Read the passage now or at the end of this devotion. What does this passage teach us about the Holy Spirit as Comforter?

About a year ago, I was sitting in my office pretty dejected. There were a couple things going on in life at the time that were very difficult. Not only were they difficult, but they were getting worse. Some family was navigating challenging relationships and conflict was escalating. Another couple we love was navigating addiction and that situation was not being resolved. A regional church situation where I carried some responsibility was bad and seemed to deteriorate more every day.

I was glum; a not often used word that well-defined my feeling. I felt powerless in fixing things and had little hope that all would be resolved. (Note: none of these situations are yet resolved.)

Then I got a notification of an email. It was from an address I did not quickly recognize.

Chris, one of the pastors at Katie and Cam's church in Michigan, had sent me a note. We had interacted a time or two when we were arranging things for our grandsons' baptism. Our conversations had been cordial, but I would not say we had 'dug deep' into a friendship. I respected him, but we just had not interacted that much.

His note was short, simple, and beautiful. I have it saved so I will share his words:

"I'm grateful for your faithful presence in ministry (which is obviously so complicated right now), your fantastic work as a dad and grandpa, and getting to hear your words of encouragement when leading baptism here at our church. Keep going. God is with you and for you and holding you in the palm of his hands. May this summer be full of the joy, peace, and rest that comes from the presence of Jesus."

Who is cutting onions?

It was a perfect word at a perfect moment from an unexpected source. I could not have been more grateful then and it has changed my relationship with Chris today. While we still do not 'dig deep', we share a bond in Christ that we did not share before. He was the Spirit's comfort to me, and I give praise to God.

That's often what the Spirit does to bring his comfort.

*"He (Barnabas) was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch."*

Frankly, this is a passage that I have skipped over many times. "Barnabas is a good guy. He went to get Saul and the two of them went and blessed Antioch." The end.

But when we consider the full story, maybe we see this interaction very differently.

Saul had gone to Tarsus two chapters before. He had fled to family when the circumstances in Jerusalem got hot. Believers in Jerusalem did not want to work with him. Different groups of Jews wanted to kill him. Saul had returned home not just because it was safe, but because he needed to withdraw from the battlefield and heal his wounds. My guess is that in Tarsus, when he sat and considered the events of the last few months, he got a little glum.

“I know I wasn’t doing your will before oh Lord. I know I was persecuting you and your church, and I will always be grateful that you turned my life around. But did you have to turn it upside down too? There’s no place in the church of Jerusalem for me. They don’t want me. And whenever you call me to speak to the Jews about you, I get a target on my forehead. I will follow you, but is this what following you means?”

We do not know how long Saul was in Tarsus. Was it a week? Was it a year? I expect that Saul and God had some heart to hearts about the challenges before him.

And Barnabas shows up. “Hey Saul! Remember me? Yeah, the guy who defended you before the church of Jerusalem. Don’t worry about that stuff from before. God’s doing work there. He’ll take care of it. But I need your help now. God told me to come get you and go to Antioch. It’s a good place. I just came from there. The church is growing and they need understanding about who Jesus is. Who better to do that than you? It’s not that far. We can be there in less than a week. God has a plan here and you are part of it!”

How did Saul hear those words? I expect that there was a tear or two in Saul being reminded that God was not done with him yet.

The Holy Spirit gives us comfort. Sometimes that comfort comes to us through the people God sends to remind us that he is still present and at work in our lives. He was not nearly done in the life of Saul, and he is still at work in all of us.

Be reminded of that today and always!

*May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn his smile towards you and give you his peace.*

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I love you all. Blessings.

Feel free to share this devotion with others.

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