

#128 “The Advantage of Having the Holy Spirit”

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What an incredible opportunity and experience the disciples had, getting the chance to walk and talk with Jesus, God in the flesh in their very presence. They could look into His eyes, touch His hands, and in the case of the disciple John, even recline his head upon Jesus’ chest (John 13:23). Jesus had called His disciples friends (John 15:15). They had spent several years together, learning and studying under this Master Teacher. But as the death of Christ neared, He spoke to them about having to leave them. He understood that this would bring them sorrow (John 16:6), but they needed to know something very important. It would be to their *advantage* that He would leave them. He says in John 16:7, "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." The Helper is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, as He is referred to in verse 13. This third Person of the Trinity is of no less value to the disciples than Jesus having come in the flesh. In fact, according to Jesus, it is an advantage for the disciples for Jesus to leave and for the Helper to come. This is a potent realization that is highly relevant for us today because, though we don’t get to walk and talk with a physical, tangible Jesus, we most certainly have the Helper within our hearts if we have trusted Christ by faith.

I know that it can be tempting at times to wish for a physical Jesus to be here with us. Then, after all, we could really find comfort. We could really ask the hard questions of faith and life. We could really feel close to God, and on down the list, or so we think. Jesus makes it abundantly clear that we have an advantage because we have the Holy Spirit. We don’t just get to walk and talk with Jesus; we get something profoundly more intimate than that. He lives within our hearts through the Person of the Holy Spirit, God Himself and one with Christ. We get Jesus as close as we could possibly get Him, with all the accompanying spiritual power and authority to do His will.

Think of the disciples. They seemed very confused and at a loss throughout their time with Christ to the point where Christ at times seemed to wonder if they were ever going to catch on (though of course He knew they would) (Matthew 15:16, Matthew 16:5-12). Yet Christ knew that it would be the Holy Spirit Who would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). Jesus taught them and taught them and taught them more still, yet it would be the Spirit Who would come after His departure that would really begin to help them get it. This Helper, God the Spirit, immediately and radically transformed (Acts 2) the uneducated disciples into powerful preachers, healers, evangelists, and bold, bold witnesses. People who observed them could tell (now that the Spirit had come to indwell them) that they had been with Christ (Acts 4:13). So, too, by way of the Spirit’s work in our hearts and lives, the world will be able to see that we know Jesus, that we have "walked and talked" with Him through reading the pages of Scripture. We truly have an advantage because Jesus sent the Helper to us.

Let us never underestimate the power and help that the Spirit of God gives to us. Scripture says that He empowers us with the ability to have joy, peace, and hope

(Romans 15:13). He teaches us what is ultimate true spiritual wisdom and reality according to the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:13). The Spirit leads us, giving us wisdom and direction as to how we should live and what we should do (Romans 8:14). He helps us to be able to express our prayers to God, interceding for us despite our weakness (Romans 8:26). He also helps us to know for sure that we are indeed children of God, testifying in our hearts to the fact (Romans 8:16). The work of the Spirit is clearly a critical component of the life and ministry of a believer. Without His guidance and help, we are powerless to accomplish anything of lasting worth for the kingdom (Zechariah 4:6).

But the great news is that we do have the Spirit, so let us not devalue the power, strength, insight, and ability that He can bring to bear upon our lives. We have a great Helper, God Himself indwelling our hearts (Romans 8:11), so let us not be discouraged but empowered and filled with hope to do the work of the kingdom with the King so very near to us in our hearts.