



He's Got Your Back

Scripture Focus

John 14:23-29 *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. 25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. 26 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. 27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*

Introduction

Unlike you, I have not had to live very long in Post 9/11 America. Sure, I have been on the receiving end of the policy changes and shifts in the global community. These changes become very clear to me every time I get on an airplane. Even checking into hotels is different and don't even get me started about trying to get car insurance or bank accounts after living outside the US. The other day I listened to an advertisement by the Department of Homeland Security asking truck drivers and those who are on the road a lot to take a class in recognizing potential terrorist and strange occurrences on the highway.

It's sad, but true. We live in a world where even elementary school kids understand and resonate with battle - ground analogies.

In a conflict where sudden skirmishes, guerilla tactics, sneak attacks, and suicide bombers are the battlefield, there's no advancing front to keep our eye upon. The battles are all around us: whether we're a soldier in Afghanistan or Iran, a train-traveler in Spain, or an office worker in New York. Those ulcer-inducing, color-coded alert status warnings are the Department of Homeland Security's reminder to all of us, everywhere, all the time, to . . . **watch your back.**

Wouldn't it be a relief to know that despite the threats swarming around us . . .

- the threat of terrorism;
- the threat of violence;
- the threat of indebtedness;
- the threat of immorality;
- the threat of drugs and alcohol;
- the threat of a rocky marriage;
- the threat of a rebellious child;
- the threat of an abusive parent;

. . . that in the face of all these threats we can rest easy with the assurance that someone has promised, "I've got your back."

That kind of presence, that kind of protection, is what Jesus describes to his disciples in the scripture we have read. Think about the context of this scripture. The disciples are kind of "freaking out" because Jesus keeps talking about leaving. After all they have been with Him for sometime and they have given up their lives and livelihood to follow this rabbi and now He's saying, "I'm out of here, soon!"

This caused the hearts of the disciples to kind of spin into a panic, why? They were going to be left behind and left

alone to fend for themselves. Jesus does not respond to their self-centered fear by coddling them or promising to not go away but instead he responds by assuring them that though He is gone from their sight He would surely not be gone from their presence.

He informs them that soon “the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost” would come. As a matter of fact He then gives two functions this comforter would have: 1) He would be our guard and guide; 2) He would be our peace.

Our Guard and Guide

I love the story of Karen. While visiting her sister and family, Karen presented a hundred dollar bill to her teen-age niece. The teenager expressed a certain amount of reluctance to accept the gift, saying, "Oh, that's very nice of you, Aunt Karen, but you really don't have to do that." To which Aunt Karen replied, "I want you to have it. After all, that's what aunts are for."

Whereupon, the grateful niece gave her a hug and whispered in her ear, "Gosh, Aunt Karen, you sure know your job description."

This is the job description of the Holy Ghost: to stand at the side of all those who follow Jesus. The Greek word used here that is translated “comforter” is “*paraklete*.” According to *Harpers Bible Dictionary* this word means, “one called to the side of.” In other words we can survive in this new world of threats and yellow alerts without fear because there is this..

- ever abiding
- ever present
- ever vigilant

...Spirit of God standing beside us all the time. The Holy Ghost is more than just “that thing” that enables us to speak in tongues but He is our battle companion. He is...

- beside us
- behind us
- in front of us and most importantly...
- IN US!!!

You need to understand – **HE’S GOT YOUR BACK!** There is not a place or time; an event or circumstance; a day or night when the all-encompassing presence of the Holy Ghost is with us. We are never...

- Alone
- Without help
- By ourselves
- Unaided
- On our own

Here’s the deal. If the job description of the Holy Ghost is to be beside us and ultimately in us: then what is our job description? Well, put simply, we are to be on the front lines. And guess what...PEOPLE ON THE FRONT LINES NEED PROTECTORS! Those who are not on the front lines look at the Holy Ghost as just some kind of added blessing, a goose bump machine or (God-forbid) just a story! But to those who face the frontlines of...

- Spiritual warfare
- Ministry
- Outreach
- Missions
- Helping to put broken people back together
- and much more...

these folks...have come to understand the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost as more than just a story – He has become the “*angel of the Lord that encamps around those that fear Him.*”

I will never forget the first time we went door-to-door in the township of Thokoza after our friend had been carjacked

at gunpoint. After the incident the rumor began swirling around that we would never be back to the township. The evil people who had committed this crime thought they had created a fear in us that would keep us away from ministry. I began to pray and seek the Lord because, I'll be honest there was some fear in me about going back to the area. I began to pray and ask the Lord what to do and all I could get from the Lord was – the evil will not triumph over the good.

So, we got in our car and drove into the area. You should have seen the people staring at us! Before we got to the end of the street the word that we were coming had beat us there. We got out of our car and began walking up and down the streets, knocking on doors, talking with people and telling them – WE HAVE CHURCH TONIGHT! Was there fear in me? YES! Was I concerned about what people may do? YES! DID I FEEL THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST – YES...YES...YES!]

Eventually this place became the greatest harvest field we have experienced. The place the Devil tried to use to make us shrink back and runaway became a field of souls. To this day we have baptized more than 80 people out of this area.

I have come to know this Holy Ghost as more than just goose-bumps, I have come to know Him as my guard and guide. But through all of these things my family and I have learned another purpose of the Holy Ghost that comes from understanding the first.

Second, the protective presence of the Comforter brings along with it more than just reminders about Jesus' teaching, more than the counsel of an Advocate. The Comforter brings with it Jesus' ultimate gift: the presence of his peace, the peace that Paul said passes all understanding. No wonder Jesus specified that the peace he promised his disciples wasn't the kind of peace the world gives. Worldly peace is achieved for only moments at a time. Worldly peace is enforced by the threat of the sword. Jesus promised his peace to all who loved and obeyed him, a peace that comes from the vital indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a peace that comes from the confidence of the continual presence of the Comforter.

We went through a tough patch at the church and some people left because of doctrinal differences. They opened up a new church next door to the school my children attend. My wife began having dreams of these people kidnapping our children. These dreams became real to us because they had made some threats toward us and toward our children. We lived in a state of fear for several weeks. We would drive by the school, call the school and stop in at unusual times. Then we decided – we refuse to live in fear and so we just began to pray that the Holy Ghost would surround our children and the school...the fear began to leave. Eventually we got permission to have a revival services in the school hall and 10 people received the Holy Ghost.

The very place that caused us great fear and dread; the physical place the Devil chose to use as a backdrop of fear in our lives became a place of great and mighty victory- because the Holy Ghost is not intimidated by the threats of men. But He is near them who have committed themselves to the front lines .

I have come to know this Comforter as more than just a good Sunday night service. I have come to know Him as the one who speaks PEACE in the midst of the storm, whose everlasting arms are forever surrounding me.

Genuine peace is available to those who know that we're never alone, never abandoned, never at the mercy of the world's whims and wickedness. The powerful presence of the Holy Ghost enables us to live our lives to the fullest, to face our greatest fears, to be more than conquerors in life's conflicts and confusions.

Political peace, worldly peace, is false and fleeting. It's based on balances of power, or balances of terror. The peace of Jesus, the peace he provides through the presence of the Holy Spirit, is truly the peace that passes understanding in this world.

Jesus' peace remains with his disciples even when they're

- In the midst of Fallujah;
- On the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan;
- On gang-ravaged urban streets in our big cities;
- Lying in a critical care hospital unit;
- Struggling to support a family;
- Coping with addictions, depressions, failures, and foibles;

- Leaving home;
- Returning home;
- Convinced they're completely alone.

This peace isn't compliance, or ambivalence. This peace isn't "pie-in-the-sky. This peace doesn't sugar-coat evil and or view despair through rose colored glasses. This peace is a strength that flows from the presence of the Spirit -- who is Christ within us, Christ among us, Christ around us. It's the peace that enables us to move forward and back to negotiate this way and that, to turn the tables and tip the scales -- because we stand at peace knowing there's always one who has our back.

So the next time you hear this word Comforter, or think of the Holy Spirit, don't think babysitter or blanket. Jesus isn't sending us a comforter in the sense of a babysitter who's going to take care of us. Jesus isn't sending us a comforter who is going to blanket us with warmth and encouragement, telling us to cheer up and be chirpy -- everything will be fine.

This Holy Ghost is our battle companion and protector who will, in the words of one preacher, "*bear every burden of service, lift every load of care, climb every mountain of difficulty, ford every stream of challenge, breach every wall of opposition and win every battle.*"

On those days when the doubts and fears of living seem to be overwhelming and pulling you under. When the fiery trials of the Devil have burned you one more time. In times of stress and strain and it feels like you are all alone let the Word of the Lord speak to you through the Prophet Isaiah...

"When you pass through the waters, I [will be] with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you" (Isaiah. 43:2).

He's Got Your Back – You are Never Alone!