

THE SPIRIT'S THIRD GIFT: COUNSEL

Is 11:1-3; Is 9:6; Jn 14:16-18, 26; Rom 8:26; I K 12:1-15; Ex 18:13-27

I. COUNSELOR (*PARACLETE*) MAY MEAN: ADVOCATE/HELPER/ATTORNEY

- A. Attorney (Counselor)-at-Law—important, necessary vocation (despite endless jokes!)
 - 1. Scribes' vital role (e.g. Ezra) in Jewish world—valuable (preserving accurate texts, offering prescient interpretations, promoting education), if prone to quibbling (helped shape Pharisee stance)
 - 2. Admirable attorneys throughout history—from Cicero to Lincoln
 - 3. Legal training prepared preeminent preachers—from Augustine to Finney
 - 4. Legal training helps apologists—from Tertullian to Lew Wallace to David Limbaugh
- B. Counselors/Advocates display mastery of :
 - 1. Knowledge:
 - a. Law's Details—thus giving precise guidance
 - b. Law's Rationale—thus explaining underlying goodness of Covenant (revealed in various covenants, interpreted by prophets such as Hosea)
 - c. The Master, Jesus both interprets and fulfils Law—He taught & lived out foundational truths (thus tithing/giving, Sabbath observance, loving enemies, etc.)
 - 2. Rhetoric: speaking/pleading for clients
 - a. Understand personal background—age, experience, strengths & weaknesses
 - b. Aptly apply law to particular cases
- C. Jesus “is seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us” (our heavenly Advocate)
- D. Holy Spirit (as our Advocate/Defender): “it is proper to the rational creature to be moved through the research of reason to perform any particular action, and this research is called counsel. Hence the Holy Ghost is said to move the rational creature by way of counsel” (Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, 52, 1).

II. COUNSELOR (*PARACLETE*) MAY MEAN: ADVISOR

- A. Members of council provide important counsel (I K 12:1-15)—unfortunately Rehoboam illustrates rash disregard for truthful, traditional, wise counsel
 - 1. Many minds usually better than one (e.g. free market rather than central planned economy)—capable of seeing more sides to question; thus church, school, corporate boards & “family counsels” provide effective guidance
 - 2. Seasoned elders usually better than impulsive youngsters (unable to delay gratifications); as “grown-ups” more likely to see “big picture” & “long-term results”
 - a. Thus “master” plumbers preferred to amateurs
 - b. Thus “experienced” golfers give lessons & win tournaments
 - 3. Aristotle: “Therefore we ought to attend to the undemonstrated saying and opinions of experienced and older people or of people of practical wisdom not less than to demonstrations; for because experience has given them an eye they are aright” (*Ethics*, VI, ii).
- B. Delegating responsibilities crucial for any social organization (Ex 18:13-37)—Jethro rightly advises son-in-law Moses regarding effective leadership
 - 1. Jethro assertive, Moses attentive—obvious problem needing attention
 - 2. Jethro spoke words eliciting Moses' consideration—helpful hints giving Moses insight, helping him think clearly, questioning *status quo*, envisioning options
 - 3. Jethro established empathy with son-in-law, facilitating Moses' enactment of principles & organization to effectively lead the nation
- C. Historical illustrations worth noting illustrate the importance of good counsel/advice
 - 1. Tribal “elders” everywhere honored (unlike “youth culture” concerns in modernity)—C.S. Lewis notes “chronological snobbery” basic to much modern foolishness
 - 2. Early Church insisted bishops be at least 40 years old, valued synods & councils—never “the church of what's happening now;” should we question “contemporary worship” mindset?
 - 3. King Arthur & Knights of the Round Table—courtly traditions worth considering
 - 4. Presidents' cabinets often explain administrations' success (e.g. Washington's) or failure (e.g. Harding's)
 - 5. Bernard Baruch effectively advises both Woodrow Wilson & FDR

Gift of Counsel

D. Holy Spirit (our Counselor/Advisor):

1. “Now it is evident that the rectitude of human reason is compared to the Divine Reason, as a lower motive principle to a higher: for the Eternal Reason is the supreme rule of all human rectitude. Consequently prudence, which denotes rectitude of reason, is chiefly perfected and helped through being ruled and moved by the Holy Ghost, and this belongs to the gift of counsel” (ST, II-II, 52, 2).
2. “It is no easy thing to determine what should be done in difficult matters and to know what should be known about the lawfulness, the appropriateness, and the opportuneness of an act” (Louis Martinez, *True Devotion to the Holy Spirit*, p. 169).
3. “That superior prudence, that divine prudence which is the fruit of a movement of the Holy Spirit, is the gift of counsel. It does not have the same name as the virtue, because the prudence we receive from the gift of counsel does not spring from the depths of our intelligence; it comes to us from above, from a superior Being. It is communicated to us by the Spirit” (Martinez, *True Devotion*, p. 171).
4. “When we work under counsel’s direction, our decisions will be quick, sure, and audacious. With what boldness do the saints proceed, with what security, and with what rapidity! They do not follow the counsels of men, nor the dictates of their own reason. They have a higher norm: eternal reason, the mind of God, which illuminates their spirit and lays before them the road they should follow” (Martinez, *True Devotion*, p. 172).

III. COUNSELOR (PARACLETE) MAY MEAN: ANALYST/PSYCHOLOGIST/CONSOLER—

at times, a Confidential Confidant Is Needed to sustain emotional well-being

A. Expertise needed:

1. Certain psychological theories may prove helpful: e.g. “Reality Therapy” or “Biblical Psychology” inasmuch as they deal truthfully with human nature
2. Carl Jung discovered most psychological problems, in people over 40, deeply religious in nature; he also discovered the value of Catholic confessional

B. Right temperament of Counselor is essential—soul-doctors especially empathetic

C. Holy Spirit (as our Analyst/Psychologist, evident in Romans 8:36) works within us amidst inarticulate moans; N.B. Oswald Chambers: “Have you ever just not known how or what to pray? Perhaps you have run out of words, or a situation has left you speechless or in so much pain that all you can do is groan. In *Romans* 8:26 Paul explains a prayer resource we may not realize we have or do not take advantage of: the Holy Spirit. When circumstances or pain leave us without words to pray, we can yield to God’s Spirit. This means that we do not pray out of our own understanding or try to figure out what to pray but we rest in the fact that he knows our heart and he knows the situation. Verse 27 says that the Father who knows all hearts also knows what the Spirit is saying on our behalf in the most baffling or distressing times. He makes prayers out of your tears, our sighs, and our groanings. What a wonderful thing to know that the Holy Spirit is interceding and, even beyond that, pleading for us believers in harmony with God’s will. In addition, Jesus, at the right hand of the Father in heaven, the place of highest honor—is praying for us!

“Thank you, Holy Spirit, for praying through in perfect agreement with God’s will, and with Jesus, interceding for us at the throne of God. When we don’t know the words to say or have no words at all, you carry our sighs, groans, and tears into God’s presence for us. What amazing grace!

“THIS IS THE GOD-GIVEN REVELATION; THAT WHEN WE ARE BORN AGAIN OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, HE INTERCEDES FOR US WITH A TENDERNESS AND AN UNDERSTANDING AKIN TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND AKIN TO GOD, THAT IS, HE EXPRESSES THE UNUTTERABLE FOR US.”