

Abiding in Christ

By Santiago Lange



The great author Mark Twain tells of a day the king and the queen of a far-off country were bringing their newly born little prince home from the royal hospital. On the way home, their carriage collided with a poor pauper's cart. In the humble vehicle the poor man was bringing his wife and their newly born baby home from the midwife's house. In the confusion of the moment, the two couples picked up the wrong babies by mistake and the little prince went home to be raised by the pauper and his wife.

As the baby grew into childhood, he was forced to go into the streets and beg for food. However, unknown to him the very streets he begged on belonged to him because they were the property of his true father, the king. Day in and day out he would go to the palace and looking through the iron fence at the little boy playing there and he would say to himself, "if only I were a prince." Of course, he was a prince! But he was not aware of that fact. The boy lived his life in poverty because he didn't know who he really was since he didn't know who his father was.

How true this is of many Christians! It is so easy to go through life doing the same thing. Some of us have never really taken the time to find out "who we belong to". Ever since the day we were born spiritually, we became Sons and Daughters of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! We are royal heirs. How sad to think that many times we go through self-imposed spiritual poverty and cheat ourselves out of the riches of God's marvelous grace. These riches are there whether we enjoy or are aware of them or not. Many believers are in a sense "unbelievers" when it comes to taking God at His word when He tells us who we are in Jesus.

From the moment we believed, God has provided us with everything we need to live the Christian life. Jesus promised His disciples a "helper" in John 15:26 we read: *"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning."* Carefully note that the context is "abiding" in Christ.

The secret of a converted spiritual life is found in John 15:5. Jesus told his disciples, *"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."* This abiding in Christ, Christ abiding in us, and the coming of the Holy Spirit are intimately related. We cannot truly abide in Christ without walking in the Spirit. If there is no walking there is no abiding. Abiding is a continuous thing. Our Christian life began with a once and for all commitment of our life to Christ. We live out this commitment one day at a time.

The word "Helper (Gr. Parakletos) means "to call alongside to help." It refers to one who comes to aid in a court of justice. Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit teach truth, abide in the disciples, and bear witness. The Helper is not only like Jesus in nature; He is also like Jesus in activity. The Holy Spirit is the continuing presence of Jesus with the believer.

The Parakletos is the immediate link between Jesus and His disciples in every generation. The Comforter, Encourager or Helper abides or dwells in all believers. He guides us into the truth of God's World. Jesus said, *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come" (John 16:13). He always points us to Christ. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore, I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you". (John 16:14-15).* The Holy Spirit never glorifies Himself. He does not seek His own glory. He will only glorify Christ and God the Father. Any religious movement that glorifies the Spirit instead of Christ is alien to the teachings of Jesus about the Spirit.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit will always be in fullest harmony with Jesus. He will not in any way contradict or replace what our Savior taught. The Holy Spirit is always Christocentric. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are always in perfect harmony.

The way into the kingdom of God is not by putting forth our best effort; it requires a completely different life. We must be born spiritually. It is a fresh new start, a new birth. It is free from the old life. It is the work of the Holy Spirit within us. We do not enter a right relationship with God through our own energies or devising. We enter God's family when the Spirit of God remakes us. Without that there is no Christianity. The Holy Spirit initiates spiritual life. It does not begin by a desperate human attempt to bring it about. It is not something we merit. We don't agonize for it. We cannot earn God's favor. What a privilege to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We simply declare what God has already done in Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, and He has come to reveal Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life. We have been marvelously blessed! □