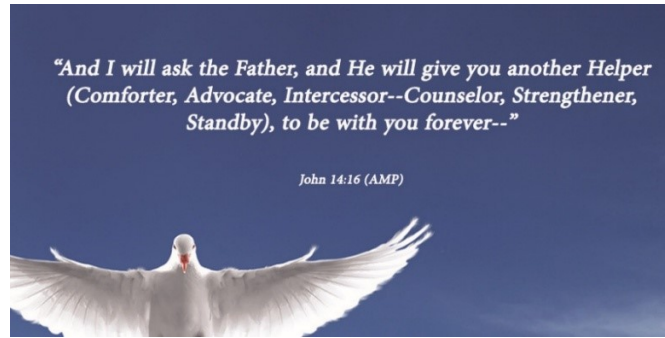


PREACHER'S PATCH



My Guardian

While talking with my brother about some family history concerning our parents, he reminded me of something Dad had shared about his career in Banking. Back in the early 1950's, Dad worked one day a week in a small outlet in Wargrave, near Reading. He was the only person present, and was given his own personal bodyguard for his protection and security. On reflection, this may not have been the ideal method of staffing, but knowing you could carry out your work with someone covering your back would have been reassuring!

By definition, a guardian is a person who protects or defends something. As Christians, the Bible reminds us constantly that we have a God who guides and guards us throughout our days. Psalm 97:11 reassures us that "the LORD ... guards the lives of His faithful ones ..." King David proclaimed of the Lord in Psalm 139:5 – "You hem me in, behind and before; You have laid your hand upon me." This psalm reminds us of just how 'all knowing' God is, of everything we are going through and experiencing.

David speaks of the Spirit of God who is everywhere. We cannot flee from His presence – for wherever we may go - His Spirit is already there. As disciples of Jesus, we have received His Holy Spirit. 1 John 4:13 says, "We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is often called the 'paraclete' coming from two Greek words meaning 'alongside' and 'to call.' In my reading and study, I was encouraged to discover this name was used to describe a warrior in ancient Greek military language. When Greek soldiers went into battle - they paired up back-to-back and covered each other.

We also can draw strength and comfort from God's promises, that in every spiritual battle we may face – the Holy Spirit stands alongside us, encouraging, watching, protecting, and covering our blind-side. Psalm 121:5 in the Amplified Bible adds an amazing clarification to this verse. "The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand." *{the side not carrying a shield}* As I look back on my walk with Jesus over the years, I am thankful for His merciful hand of keeping; when the Holy Spirit has covered my back - the side not carrying a shield - during those times when I have made wrong decisions or have not acknowledged and trusted the Lord as I should. The Holy Spirit is our 'life partner' and this week as we seek to serve Jesus, He will be drawing alongside you - to guard and goad you in the right direction. The LORD is with you - and for you.

Jim Collins

SERMON SUMMARY

Last Sunday we considered God's Holy Spirit Gift of "Leading". A glance at the world shows us many bad styles of leadership, but the Lord calls us to a better way as demonstrated by Jesus Himself – Servant Leadership.

As followers of Jesus, those called to leadership should seek to serve rather than be served, to care for the flock under their care, to share as part of a team ministry alongside others who have that calling: in this way all may benefit from the range of gifts given to our leaders. On the flip side, the congregation are called to "remember their leaders and imitate their faith", to pray for them and use their own gifts for the glory of God and the blessing of the local congregation.

And though not all are called to leadership in the church, many have been called as leaders in the home, workplace or community, which equally demands the help of God's Holy Spirit gifting.