

THE HOLY SPIRIT - “Our Misunderstood Counselor”



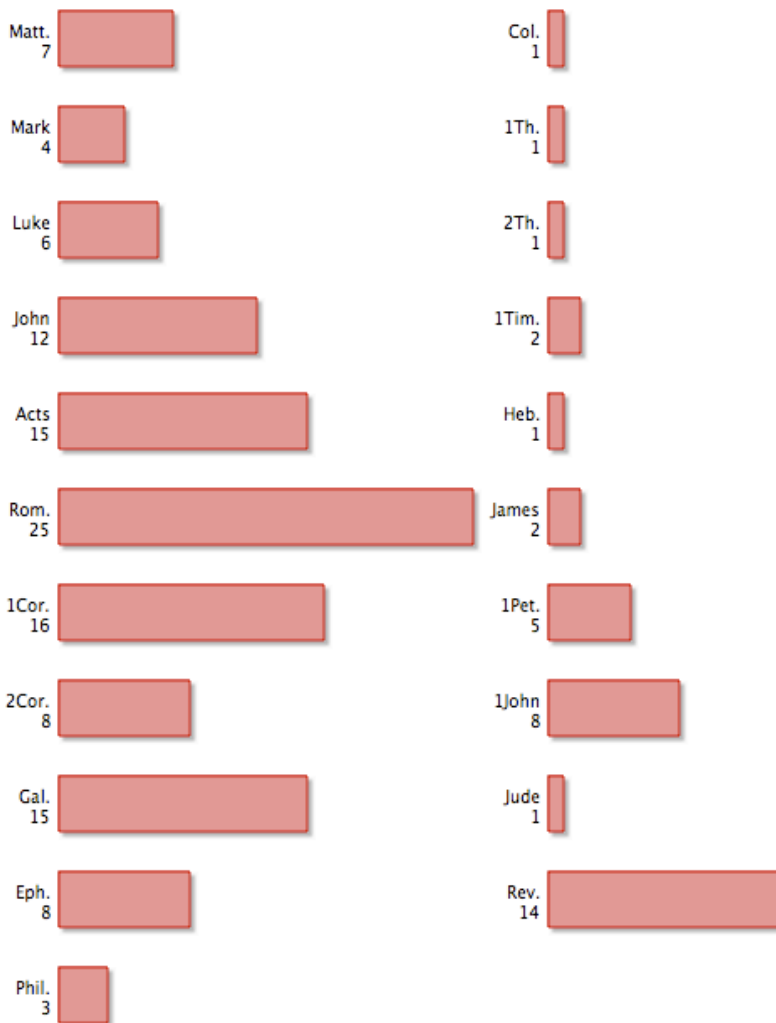
1. **(Q1a)** The imagery of the cistern in the Jeremiah 2:13 passage is very illustrative of the point being sought here. In the ANE, the “cistern” was the lifeblood of the city or village. It was their source of water. Because water is the scarcest natural resource in the Holy Land, and always has been, the location of cities was always determined by its presence. To compensate for natural water supplies, often cisterns were built. An underground cavern of sorts, plastered on the inside, it became a means to store water. Yahweh’s complaint here, by using this metaphor, is that His people have abandoned dependence upon Him and replaced it with dependence upon themselves. And, their efforts are insufficient. Their “cistern” leaks. “Living water” in the Bible is a reference typically to *moving* water; the water supplied by rivers and streams.
2. **(Q4)** The verb and noun forms of “comfort” appear 10x in five verses in this selection from 2 Corinthians! There are two different word families for suffering/affliction in this section too. Seven references to pain. In five verses, we have 17 references to pain and comfort! It is a concentrated section of *teaching* on the topic of suffering and comfort. And, the inescapable conclusion is that my suffering is also for the benefit of others. Faced with this reality, I am also faced with the question: “*Am I willing to suffer for someone else?*” A negative answer to this question becomes very awkward quickly, because our status as children of God is the consequence of Jesus suffering and dying for us.

It is also interesting that the Greek preposition translated by the English phrase, “in order that” is *not* the typical preposition used to indicate purpose (*hina*). It is the word *eis*, which is a preposition that has the notion of direction or movement associated with it. It’s almost as if Paul is saying, “*He comforts us to move us in the direction of becoming comforters ourselves. We become the agents of comfort for others. We become the tangible expressions of the Holy Spirit’s ministry.*” If comfort is an expression of grace, then this makes perfect sense, for grace is always “in motion.” It is *never* intended to be captured, enjoyed, and hoarded.



“Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Background)** There are numerous areas of theology where Christians seem to be prone to generate more “heat” than “light” when it comes to dialogue. The Holy Spirit is certainly one of them. A principle to remember, when studying any topic or doctrine in Scripture, is that genre (the *type* of literature) determines the boundaries of interpretation. In other words, what *kind* of text I’m reading determines to a great extent, what the text can mean and not mean. For example, a passage of history is different than a chapter of Paul. Or, a psalm is very different than a personal letter (e.g. 2 Timothy). When it comes to studying what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit, we must begin with the books and passages that are actually teaching *about* the Holy Spirit, not merely those that mention him. Historical books, for example, like Acts, do *not* give us any interpretive clues regarding the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Yet, many believers go to the Book of Acts *first*, rather than last (for examples). In regard to this, it surprises many people to realize that the two books of the New Testament that contain the greatest concentration (i.e. occurrences/verse) of *teaching* about the Spirit happen to be Paul’s two most distinctly *theological* books: Romans and Galatians. The chart below shows the number of times the phrase, “the Spirit” shows up in each of the 27 NT books. A lot can be gleaned from just looking at it:



2. **(Q3-Rom 15)** Paul's statement here, is *not* a reference to "claiming" specific promises in the Bible as an aid to persevering. The "encouragement of the Scriptures" that he is speaking of is more likely the accounts we have of other believers throughout redemptive history who have faced difficulties similar or worse than me, and how Yahweh brought them through them. Others have endured life so that we can too. This is very different than a sort of "verse a day keeps the Devil away" perspective on "claiming promises" in the Bible. Although there are certainly times when God illuminates a particular passage or verse at a time when we really seem to need it, the primary purpose of the stories in our Bibles is to point us to His faithfulness over time as revealed in the lives of saints long dead.



"Going Deeper"

1. **(Q-overall)** How did your understanding of the Holy Spirit change from doing this study?
2. **(Q2a)** Have several group members share their paraphrases of this verse.
3. **(Q5)** Have several group members (different from above) share their responses to this question, *and* indicate if it's different since they started studying *To Run and Not Grow Tired*.