

It's usually just a tiny white pill. It tastes slightly bitter but then again you're supposed to swallow it not chew it. In under an hour after taking the pill that headache of yours should disappear. Aspirin is pretty amazing isn't it? It's a cheap and seemingly reliable painkiller that's been around since the beginning of the 20th Century though its qualities were already known in the 5th Century B.C. You know aspirin works, but do you know how it works? Aspirin is an acid (acetylsalicylic acid) that stops cells from making prostaglandin - a chemical that helps the brain register pain. Knowing how aspirin works will keep us from abusing it. For example if you break your arm, you might think: "I'll just pop some aspirin and get better. In fact, the more aspirin I take the faster I should heal." It doesn't work that way. Aspirin doesn't make you better it only makes you feel better. Aspirin simply interferes with the pain signals that your nerves send to your brain (everyday-chemistry.suite101.com). In fact taking lots of aspirin is not good for you. It eats away at the lining in your stomach!

Although he doesn't come in the form of a tiny white pill, the Holy Spirit is a helper to fallen mankind and we don't have to worry about overdosing on him. He will not destroy the lining of your stomach. How exactly does the Holy Spirit help us? My prayer is that all of you are: "Ready To Be Convicted By The Holy Spirit!"

Jesus spoke the words of our text on Maundy Thursday - the night Judas would betray him. Our text begins with Jesus saying: "I am going to him who sent me" (**John 16:5**). Upon hearing Jesus' announcement that he was going away, the disciples were too stunned to say anything. It's the kind of shock you might experience if a well-liked pastor suddenly hands in his resignation. A pastor resigning from his office is rarely prompted by good events. Likewise the disciples wondered what Jesus' words meant for them. It certainly couldn't be good. But Jesus went on to say to them: "6 Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. 7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away" (**John 16:6, 7a**).

How could Jesus' departure be good for the disciples? A soldier fighting on the front lines may think the same thing of his comrade who quietly slips away during the heat of battle. He will resent that soldier until he sees him leading a squadron of tanks to the rescue. That soldier hadn't abandoned them after all. Instead he had risked his life to bring help by squirming through enemy lines. Jesus wasn't leaving his disciples to bring help, however, for he was the "help" the heavenly Father had sent. So where was he going? Jesus was going back to his heavenly Father but the way back was through the cross of Calvary. So like a soldier who slips away from the front lines, not to run and get help, but to lure the machine gun fire his way so his comrades can escape, Jesus climbed the cross of Calvary to draw God's wrath against sin away from us and onto himself. Yes, Jesus' departure from the disciples was a good thing. Had Jesus remained with them, he never would have won forgiveness. He never would have defeated death. Jesus would be no good to us then, just another guru who spoke some neat parables.

So instead of weeping, the disciples should have been rejoicing. Finally, the time had come for God to complete his plan of salvation. But because they failed to ask Jesus what he meant when he said he was leaving they were sad, frightened, and confused. Friends, when we fail to inquire God's Word to help us make sense of life and what lies ahead of us, we shouldn't be surprised if our days are filled with sadness and confusion too.

But being the loving savior that he is Jesus wanted to offer his disciples some

comfort. So he made it known that while he would be visibly leaving them, he would in turn send the Holy Spirit to be their helper.

Listen to the promise again. "But I tell you the truth; it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor (Comforter) will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you." Jesus calls the Holy Spirit our counselor or comforter, someone who comes to you and stays with you and reminds you of all the blessings you have in Christ, especially in your low moments. Remember when you were off to camp. You were homesick, but then you met a friend that stayed by your side. Remember when you were off to war, and your buddies, your band of brothers, were there to help you through each day. Remember when you lost someone you loved, and a card came in the mail that had just the right words of comfort for you, or someone called who spoke just the right words for you. No friend in need can even begin to compare to how the Holy Spirit helps you.

Jesus talked more about the Holy Spirit that night before he died. He also said in John 14:26, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." The Holy Spirit leads us into the truths of God's Word and makes the blessings that we have in Jesus real to us. Then the Holy Spirit keeps reminding us of these blessings daily, even hour by hour.

Dwight Moody, a famous evangelist from the States, was once asked if he was filled with the Holy Spirit. "Sure," he replied and then added: "but I leak." You and I leak too, for every Christian is like a giant hot air balloon. Unless hot air keeps blowing into these balloons they'll sink and then deflate becoming nothing more than a shell. Likewise unless the Holy Spirit continues to fill us, we'll stop soaring towards heaven and our faith will collapse into a shell of hypocrisy. How do we ensure that the Holy Spirit keeps filling us? By staying connected to God's Word and the sacraments. Like a burner pumping hot air into a hot air balloon, it's the means of grace that keeps pumping the Holy Spirit into us.

The Holy Spirit who comforts us also corrects people and straightens out their thinking. Jesus said, "When he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin." It is not hard to convince people there is a lot of sin in the world. Listen to the news as you drive. Read the paper. Watch the television. There are days when we get a sick feeling in our stomachs because of all the evil in the world. It is easy to see evil in others, but it is much harder to see it in me. That is where we need the Holy Spirit to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin. The Apostle Paul confessed in Romans 7, "For I did not know what it was to covet if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.'" Then he goes on to say, "Once the commandment came, sin sprang to life in me, and I died." We are born into this world making excuses for ourselves, justifying ourselves and minimizing the weakness and faults we have. Then the Holy Spirit goes to work in our hearts and sets the record straight. He shows us how we have fallen short of God's glory.

The Holy Spirit convinces of our guilt and shame, and shows us how ugly we are by ourselves in the sight of God. The same Holy Spirit also shows us Jesus as the one who took the burden of our sin, removed it and made us clean before our God.

The Holy Spirit also convicts the world of sin in regard to righteousness. Jesus said, "in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father where you can see me no more." When Jesus was here on this earth he taught people that their righteousness

was totally inadequate to make themselves acceptable to God. You remember the story of the two men who went up to pray. One man prayed, "Father, I thank you that I am not like other people." He bragged about how he fasted and gave a tenth of his money to the Lord. The other man was a tax collector who had nothing to offer God except a life of cheating people in their taxes. He prayed, "God have mercy on me a sinner." Jesus said that this man went home justified, that means declared righteousness.

The Holy Spirit has opened your eyes to see what the Bible says about your own home grown righteousness. It is toxic. Romans 3 says, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin." I may appear to be a righteous and good in the eyes of the community if I try to live a decent life. I may offer my neighbor tomatoes from garden or even help him catch the gopher in his front yard. I am nothing in God's eyes. My righteousness is unacceptable to God.

In these last days in which we are living the Holy Spirit is opening the eyes of people to see that they have a righteousness that does not come from their poor and failed attempts to keep the law. The Holy Spirit helps us see that Jesus blood and Jesus' righteousness were totally acceptable to God. As the Holy Spirit leads you to believe that you are covered by Jesus' blood.

It is the Holy Spirit who also convinces us about judgment. "He will convict the world in regard to judgment." Then Jesus adds, "In regard to judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned." The Holy Spirit is so powerful in your life and mine that he convinces us of the truth that this world will someday be destroyed and we must all stand before God in the final judgment to give an account of how we have lived. Satan loves to accuse us before God's throne day and night. Jesus said the Holy Spirit will come to us and convince us that the prince of this world now stands condemned. The Revelation says, "They overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of the testimony." You can tell Satan to take a hike, and take a long walk off a short pier, jump in a lake, and even go to hell where he belongs. You can tell him how you have the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit has convinced you that that the blood of Jesus Christ your Savior, God's Son cleanses you from all sin.

They say that taking an aspirin a day is good for the heart. That may be but it's not as good as getting a daily dose of the Holy Spirit. For he comes to comfort and to convince so that we are spiritually healthy and ready to stand before Jesus on Judgment Day. Keep making use of this holy helper Jesus himself has sent you. Amen.