

32. The Work of the Holy Spirit

John 16:5-16

The Gospel According to John

Years ago, my wife Sandy and I went with a team of seven on a short-term mission trip from England, visiting France, Spain, and Portugal. We visited missionaries and pastors in those countries and helped them with their evangelism efforts. We did street preaching, mime, and various creative means to reach people across language barriers with the Gospel. To accomplish this journey of several thousand miles, we had a twenty-year-old van! We moved the back seats out for a sleeping room in the back. Can I give a word of advice? When making a long trip like that, it is not wise to use an old van!

We got several hundred miles into France and were driving through the night in the middle of nowhere when, all of a sudden, the red light on the dashboard came on. What would you have done? We did what anyone would do in those circumstances. We didn't want our engine to blow a gasket or break down, so we stopped for the rest of the night and slept in the van before driving to the nearest garage the next morning. It is foolishness to carry on driving with a red light glaring at you on your car dashboard. The red warning light is there to tell you something is wrong.

In the passage we are studying today, we will see aspects of the Holy Spirit's ministry of "putting on the red light," i.e., to alert us and convict us of sin. The Holy Spirit has a way to put on the warning light for the engine of our lives. It is a wise thing to stop and reflect why there is an inner warning light, i.e., the conviction of sin in our spirit. □

Before we get into reading and talking about the Holy Spirit, we need to look at the context for the verses we are studying. It is Jesus' last night before His crucifixion. John, the Apostle, recalls that the twelve of them had left the upper room, the place of the Last Supper (the end verse of John chapter 14), and were on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane just east of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It is likely that Jesus stopped on the way near the Temple where they could view the golden vine that hung on the outside entrance and talk with the disciples that He is the True Vine of Israel and that they are the fruit-bearing branches (John 15), with the Father being the Gardener who would bring great fruit to their lives. Jesus began to prepare them for the hours that were ahead of them when He, the Shepherd, would be smitten, and the sheep scattered as prophesied by Zechariah (13:7). Over the last months of His ministry, He warned them repeatedly about His impending death, but they could not imagine such a thing happening to their beloved Master and Teacher. Christ's concern for His disciples was an indication that the time was near. Let's read His words to the disciples that night:

⁵but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, "Where are you going?"
⁶Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. ⁷But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you (John 16:5-7).

They finally understood that He was leaving them, and they were filled with grief at the thought. There were probably many tears and sobbing as He shared these words we have just read. For

more than three years, they had been living with Christ, with all the intimate fellowship they had experienced, and now that He was saying goodbye, it inevitably brought great sadness and raw emotions from them. Specific questions possibly arose in their minds, "How could He be leaving us?" "There has to be some other way!" Their reason was assaulted at the thought of His death, but there was no other way than the way of the cross.

Once the twelve would arrive in the Garden of Gethsemane, The Lord's mind and heart had to be focused in prayer against invisible evil forces. So he continued to prepare them for the onslaught of Satan and his minions after His death. One can imagine the glee of the enemy, Satan, that his plan was unfolding. Spiritual demonic forces, as well as Christ's physical enemies, would soon have the Lord under their control to do with as they wanted. Their corrupt evil nature would enjoy pulling out His beard, flaying His back, punching him in the face, and brutalizing His body. The raw evil would shock the disciples as they witnessed what would take place against their beloved Master. They must not fall away when confronted with the hour of His death.

Amid their tears and sobbing, He told them that it was good for them that He was going away, for, with His departure, He would send the Holy Spirit. Again, we see here another indirect statement as to the Lordship of Christ. If He were just a man, He would not be talking about sending God the Holy Spirit to them. No man sends God to complete His commands, but Jesus was the God-Man, the one sent by His Father into the world to make men right with God.

The work and ministry of Christ through His Body would be considerably multiplied and reproduced by the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world of humanity. While Jesus was in His flesh, the growth of the Kingdom of God would be limited, but now, due to His gift of righteousness to man, He would make it possible for the Holy Spirit to be able to take up residence within the believer's life. This statement was beautiful for the disciples to hear. Up to that point, the Holy Spirit's presence had come only for particular tasks and extraordinary people, but here they were told that the Spirit would come on them, and of course, on us as well who are believers in the twenty-first century. How beautiful is the thought that the Spirit comes to live in the temples of the hearts of men and women! (1 Corinthians 6:19).

The Spirit's Work in the World

⁸When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned (John 16:8-11).

What would you say are the most important things Jesus has to say about the work of the "Advocate" (v. 7), the Holy Spirit, from verses 8-11? What is the Holy Spirit to prove or testify?□

Jesus told them that there would be three aspects of the Spirit's work in the world. He would "prove" or "convict" the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (v. 8). Before we take a look at these three, let's talk about this word to *prove* or *convict*, depending on your English translation. The Greek word used is *elegcho*. It was a word that was used to describe the cross-

examination of a person under judgment in a court setting, with evidence building to the degree that a man collapses under the pressure to admit his guilt. Only when a man sees His need of salvation will he respond to the Gospel. The Greek word *elegcho* was used to convince, convict, or prove a person guilty.

I have read and heard much about revivals in history, and one of the things I have seen is that a revival of Christianity comes as a result of believing prayer. When a body of believers cries out to the Lord because of the sin of their city or country, the presence of the Holy Spirit comes to an area, town, or city with a strong sense of God's presence accompanied by great conviction of sin. During the Great Awakening revival in the United States, when Charles Finney came into a town, people would notice a difference in the spiritual atmosphere around the city. People became struck with a sense of emptiness and guilt concerning their sin. Finney had a powerful touch of the Holy Spirit upon his life that seemed to stay with him in great power as he went from village to village preaching the Word of God. When he spoke about Christ, people would fall on the floor under great conviction by the Holy Spirit, crying out to God to have mercy on their souls. There seemed to be a unique presence of God over the area where he was preaching. Finney writes of one time:

The state of things in the village and the surrounding area was such that no one could come into the town without feeling awestruck with the impression that God was there in a peculiar way. As an example of this, I will relate to a particular incident. The sheriff of the county resided in Utica. There were two courthouses in the county, one in Rome and the other in Utica (New York State).□

Consequently, the sheriff, Bryant by name, came to Rome quite frequently. He later told me that he had heard of the state of things at Rome, and he, together with many others in Utica, had laughed a great deal about it. One day it was necessary for him to come to Rome. He said that he was glad to have business there, for he wanted to see for himself what things were really like. He was driving in his one-horse sleigh, without any particular impression in his mind at all, until he crossed what was called the old canal, a place about a mile from the town. He said as soon as he crossed the canal, a strange impression came over him, awe so deep that he could not shake it. He felt as if God permeated the whole atmosphere. He said that this feeling increased the entire way until he came into the village. He stopped at Mr. Franklin's hotel, and the stable-man came and took his horse. He observed, he said, that the stable-man looked just like he himself felt—as if he were afraid to speak. He went into the hotel and found the gentleman there with whom he had business. He said that they were both so obviously shaken that they could hardly attend to business. He reported that several times in the course of the short time he was there, he had to rise from the table abruptly and go to the window and look away, trying to divert his attention to keep from weeping. He saw that everyone else appeared to feel just as he did. Such awe, such solemnness, such a state of things he had never had any conception of before. He quickly concluded his business and returned to Utica—but (as he said later) never to speak lightly of the Spirit's work in Rome again. A few weeks later in Utica, when Finney traveled to that town, he himself was converted."¹

¹ *Autobiography of Charles G. Finney*. Published by Fleming H. Revel Company. □

This kind of power is a sovereign work of God in an area. Likewise, God, in His sovereign way, comes to individuals. In the passage, which we are now viewing, the Lord is talking about the coming of the Spirit to them and us as individuals. In verse seven, Jesus said He would send the Spirit "to you." Unbelievers will witness the Spirit's presence in the life of the believer, and they will be convinced or convicted of their sin. They might not always admit their thoughts of conviction, but the Spirit does use the witness and the manner of life of the believer. □

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the World

Share your stories of how you were impacted by the life of a believer in Christ.

1) The first thing the Spirit does is to convict the world of sin. The word *sin* is in the singular tense (vs. 8 and 9). It is not individual sins that are mentioned, but the sin of unbelief at Christ's finished work on the cross as a substitute *for* you and *as* you. When a man or woman stands in the judgment court of God at the end of his or her life, there will be one question that will be asked, "What did you do with the free gift of forgiveness for sin and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ?" Did you repent (turn around from your sin) and believe (wholeheartedly trust) in what was accomplished at the cross for you? The sin of unbelief will send many to an eternity without God. "He that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12).

2) The second work of the Spirit is to convict the world as to righteousness because Christ is going to the Father (v. 10). When Christ returned to the Father, the Bible tells us that His ministry as a High Priest was to credit to our account the righteousness of Christ that He won for us at the cross. "But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). To sit is a picture of rest after completed work. This righteousness that convicts men without Christ is imputed righteousness given to them at their conversion to Christ. What do we mean by imputed righteousness? The word, "impute" means "to pass to one's account, to count over." It means that Jesus places His righteousness to our spiritual bank account when we trust upon Him for salvation. We are given the righteousness of Christ as a gift:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Lord Jesus is saying that, when the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples, the Spirit's presence on them and in them will be seen as righteousness for which many people are looking. A Christian's confidence, faith, and right standing before God are very convicting to an unbeliever. This right standing and righteousness are what Saul (Paul) viewed on the face of Stephen when his face shone like an angel (Acts 6:15). The glory and righteousness of God on Stephen's face as He died amid persecution was a powerful testimony to those watching his stoning.

3) The third work of the Holy Spirit is to convict or convince the world of judgment. There is a time of judgment coming when things will be put right in this world. The Holy Spirit's arrival on the Day of Pentecost would remind the world of men that there would be accounting as to their

lives in this world: “So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.” (Romans 14:12). But why does the Lord add the phrase, “because the prince of this world now stands condemned?” (v. 11). This statement is very similar to what Jesus said earlier, “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out” (John 12:31).

Who is the prince of this world to whom Jesus is referring in this passage? Why would he stand condemned? What was about to happen to the prince of this world?

Satan Judged at the Cross

Let us spend time trying to understand how Satan, the prince of the world, was condemned at the crucifixion.

If you are a believer, when Jesus died on the cross, He paid the redemption price to release you from the enemy’s stronghold on you: “You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies” (1 Corinthians 6:20); the precious blood of Christ was the substitutionary payment from Satan’s slave market of sin. However, the question we want to answer is “How was Satan judged at the cross?”

Let us go back to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. When the devil was tempting Jesus in the desert, Satan took Christ to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8). How could Satan offer something to Christ that was not his to offer? The Scriptures are clear that the Earth belongs to the Lord (Psalm 24:1). Jesus never disputed the claim by Satan that dominion over the Earth was his. In fact, in two other places, the Lord upheld Satan's legal claim by calling Satan "the prince of this world" (John 12:31 and 14:30). □

Satan managed to gain legal rule and dominion over the Earth in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve chose to obey Satan rather than God. From the beginning, God had given rulership and dominion to man: □

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them **rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, **over all the earth**, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. **Rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:26-28 Emphasis mine).

The race of Adam, i.e., humankind, became subservient to Satan and gave him the dominion over the earth that God had given to man from the beginning. The Hebrew word, *radah*, translated with our English word “rule,” means to “rule over or subdue.”² Speaking by the Spirit, King David said something very similar:

² *Key Word Study Bible*. AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN. Page 1550.

³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁵You made him a little lower than the **heavenly beings** and **crowned him with glory and honor**. ⁶You made him **ruler** over the works of your hands; **you put everything under his feet** (Psalm 8:3-6 Emphasis mine).

The Hebrew word *mashal*, translated with the English word “ruler” in Psalm 8, verse 6, indicates that Adam (and we as his descendants) are God’s managers, governors, or stewards over the earth. *Mashal* means to “rule, reign, govern, have dominion over and manage.”³ Man was different from the rest of the created beings due to being crowned with glory and honor and made the ruler over the Earth. He alone was created in the image of God and could rule with grace and true justice.

The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has **given** to man (Psalm 115:16 Emphasis mine).

Adam was the federal head of the whole race. What happened to him happened to us all, just like what Christ accomplished on the cross, i.e., His substitutionary death, was *for* us and *as* us. At the Fall in the Garden of Eden, Adam gave away into the hands of Satan his right and dominion to rule. Satan could boldly say to Christ at the temptation, “**I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to**” (Luke 4:6). Satan was not tempting Jesus with something that he did not have; he was offering Jesus something that was in his hands to use as leverage. He sought to tempt Christ to bypass the cross by bowing down to him and acting outside of the Father’s will.

Humanity was the trustee of the earth, and the redemption of the earth could only come through a man. Satan could legally do anything he wanted to any of Adam's progeny (descendants) because they had become slaves of Satan due to Adam's choice to obey Satan rather than God. All it took was one act of disobedience. A man had to come to whom Satan had no claim. That's why Christ had to be born of a virgin. It is no wonder that the doctrine of the Virgin birth is under attack and something that the enemy wants to refute as foolish. It is an essential element in the Redemption story. □

The Messiah, Christ, had to be one of Adam's race, but He could not be tainted by sin; otherwise, He would have been owned and dominated by Satan, having Adam's nature. Christ was not only 100% man, but also He was 100% God as well, being conceived of the Holy Spirit. Satan, therefore, had no claim on the innocent Christ due to Jesus’ not having Adam’s DNA passed down to Him.

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me (John 14:30 Emphasis mine).

When Satan took it upon himself to bring Jesus to the cross, for the first time under divine law, he became a murderer because Jesus was completely innocent, having never sinned. Judgment was pronounced upon him at the cross. Every man that makes Christ’s death his own by

³ Ibid, Page 1530.

believing and trusting in His death to be the payment for his sin is made righteous before God. Eternal justice was satisfied at the cross. In the courts of heaven, Satan was and is legally condemned as a murderer because he had no right to kill Jesus due to His sinless life.

¹⁴Since the children have flesh and blood, **he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**¹⁵and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Satan and his demons do not want you to understand the full implications of the verses above. Indeed, they did not understand why God allowed the evil one and his fallen angels and demons to crucify Christ.

None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8).

Who are the rulers of this age? It certainly was not just the chief priests, Pharisees, and leaders of Israel that are implicated in the death of Christ. They were accountable for what happened, but also Satan, his evil angels, and the demonic evil forces will be held to account for their manipulation and deception of the world of men. I would have loved to see Satan's reaction when Christ gave up His Spirit at the crucifixion and descended to the lower regions of Hades (1 Peter 3:19; Matthew 12:40). We know He took the keys of death and hell out of the enemy's hand:

¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And **I hold the keys of death and Hades** (Revelation 1:17-18).

The cross of Christ was not only the judgment of Satan but also our deliverance from his clutches. This was what Jesus was telling the disciples as they wept, i.e., that He would be seated at the right hand of the Father and that His obedience to die as the sacrificial lamb of God would bring deliverance for all who would take His death in sacrificial payment as their own.

The Holy Spirit's Work in the Believer

¹²I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you." ¹⁶Jesus went on to say, "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me" (John 16:12-16).

We have talked about the Holy Spirit's work of conviction in unbelievers, but now Jesus speaks of three aspects of the Spirit's work in the life of the believer: 1) He will guide believers into all the truth (v. 13); 2) He will tell us what is to come (v. 13b); 3) He will glorify Christ (v. 14).

1) He will guide us into all truth (v. 13).

Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all the truth. Do you experience this happening in your life? Share what this looks like. How does it happen?

Truth is not something that man discovers; it is something the Holy Spirit reveals. Truth exists apart from us, but if we have the heart to learn, the Spirit will reveal God's truth. There is an accountability that comes with truth, though. The truth revealed to us is something that God expects us to live out. The more of the truth revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and put to work in our lives, the more we will embody Christ and become mature in Him.

2) He will tell us what is to come. This was what Jesus was doing with the eleven disciples that night, i.e., telling them what was ahead, so that when persecution happened, they would know that they were still in God's will. **“Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).** If we dig deep into the Scriptures with an open heart, we will find much written about what is still future. As well as prophetic scriptures, I do believe, also, that the Lord is restoring the prophetic ministry in these days. We should be cautious in our listening to use the plumb line of the Scriptures to see that what is built is according to the pattern of the Scriptures. We are living in days that the Spirit is opening our eyes more and more to the prophetic scriptures to prepare the Church for the days of persecution that I believe are ahead.

3) He will glorify Christ. I have found that the more I seek to teach on the Lord Jesus Christ and the work He has accomplished, the more the Spirit will bless that work. Teachers and preachers, Small Group leaders, and all who seek to serve the Lord, make much of Jesus Christ and put Him before the people, and you will find that the Holy Spirit's stamp of approval and His presence will be on your work because His passion is to glorify the Lord Jesus. Read the Gospels often and saturate yourself with the teaching of Christ.

I have said this before, but it is worth repeating: drawing others to Christ is the mission of the Holy Spirit. We need to be His messengers. Jesus is still speaking to us just as He was when He was with His disciples. He promised them: □

“ The Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you” (John 16:15).

So, be a willing vessel, store up His words in your heart, and share Who Jesus is to you and what He has done in your life. Remember that you may be the only representative of Christ some will ever encounter. Phil Keaggy wrote a song called *Portrait*, taken from a poem written by Beatrice Clelland entitled, “Portrait of a Christian.” Let the truth of this sink into your heart and inspire you to draw near to God. Let His Holy Spirit draw near to you and help you to be His witness.

To me 'twas not the truth you taught,

*to you so clear, to me so dim.
But when you came to me,
you brought a sense of Him.*

*And from His light He beckons me,
and from your lips His love is shed.
Til I lose sight of you and see the Christ instead.*

*Is it a beautiful smile?
A holy light upon your brow?
Oh no, I felt His presence when you laughed just now.*

Prayer: Father, my prayer today is that Your Spirit would come anew to us. May the breath of the Spirit breathe on us and revive our spirit to walk in all Your ways. Shine Your light on our path and personally reveal more of Jesus to each of us and the world. Amen!

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