

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#30: “The Work of the Holy Spirit”

SCRIPTURE: John 16:4-15

INTRO:

In our passage for today, Jesus continues His parting teaching to the eleven disciples, preparing them for His departure, beginning with...

...THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

He addresses the sorrow that had filled their hearts because of His impending departure, and even though He had already told them of the Comforter that was coming, He saw a need to repeat that promise, because, apparently, they were so grieved over the idea of His departure that they hadn't sought the comfort of the Comforter. They were so concerned about His leaving them that they weren't thinking about *where* He was going, *why* He was going, and what His going would mean to them.

Then He tells them that it is to their advantage that He goes away, because if He doesn't go away, the Helper (or Holy Spirit) would not come. Why is that? Why did Jesus have to go away, or the Holy Spirit would not come?

Jesus had to fulfill his earthly mission from the Father, which included atoning for our sins, which not only involved his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, but also his Ascension into heaven, which fulfilled the Day of Atonement sacrifices, as described in Hebrews 9:11-14. See also Leviticus 16. The Holy Spirit's work would be based upon the ministry of Jesus, including His life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension back to the Father in heaven.

Note what He says the Holy Spirit would do when He came: ***“He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will***

see me no longer; concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is judged.”

The world is a sinful place, and one of the Holy Spirit’s tasks is to convict the world of its sin. No amount of preaching, pleading, or pointing of fingers will bring about the conviction of sin, unless the Holy Spirit is at work in the sinner’s heart. It is the Spirit’s job to convict. And what is the most basic sin of which the world is guilty? Jesus specifies it as *unbelief*. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit is at work in the world ***“because they believe not in [Christ].”*** Once a person responds to the Spirit’s conviction and turns to faith in Christ, the other sins he practiced will be taken care of. It is the sin of unbelief — a refusal to trust in Jesus — that is primary.

The world must also be convicted of righteousness, and this, too, is something the Holy Spirit does. There is a righteous standard we are all held to, despite the world’s stubborn denial of absolute truth. And who is the standard-bearer of righteousness? Jesus points to *Himself* as that standard: ***“Because I go to the Father.”*** There is only one Person who came down from heaven, lived a life of sinless perfection, and who ascended back to heaven — the Son of Man, who lives to be our Intercessor (John 3:13; 1 Timothy 2:5). The righteousness that the world tries to deny is found demonstrated in Christ. Everything He ever said and did was the consummate expression of God the Father (John 8:28; Colossians 2:9). He is righteousness personified, and none can measure up to Him (Romans 3:23).

The world is facing judgment, and the Holy Spirit also convicts them of this truth. There is a day of reckoning scheduled — a day in which the holy God will mete out justice and rid His creation of sin. In fact, this judgment has already begun. With whom did it begin? Jesus identifies *Satan* as the one on whom judgment fell: ***“Because the ruler of this world is cast out.”*** Jesus had earlier indicated that it was at His death on the cross that ***“the prince of this world will be driven out”*** (John 12:31). It was on the cross that Jesus redeemed sinners for God and utterly vanquished Satan. ***“That by his death he***

might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). Three days later Jesus rose from the dead, showing to all the world that Satan’s rule has been overthrown. All who reject Christ and remain in their sin will be condemned along with Satan, and this is the warning that the Holy Spirit sounds in the hearts of the unsaved.

The influence of the Holy Spirit in an unsaved person’s life will lead that person to the realization that he is guilty, that God is just, and that all sinners are deserving of judgment. Once a sinner has been awakened to his soul’s great need, the Spirit will point him to Christ, the one and only Savior and Refuge from judgment (John 16:14). In all of this, the Spirit uses His “sword,” the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17), and the result is an obedient and regenerated heart.

The apostle Peter preached the Word to the crowd on the day of Pentecost, the day the Spirit arrived and baptized the apostles, and when they heard the Word of God, they were convicted of their sin and asked, *“What shall we do?”* Peter said, *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...”* And three thousand were baptized into Christ on that day.

We preach the same Jesus, and the Holy Spirit convicts in the same way today.

Then He tells them that...

...HE HAS MANY THINGS TO SAY TO THEM BUT THEY CAN’T BEAR THEM AT THIS TIME.

Why? Why were the disciples unable to bear anything more at this time?

Well, this was probably due to their Jewish backgrounds. Because of what they had been taught about the Messiah and the Messianic kingdom – their prejudices and suppositions of a temporal Messiah and a temporal kingdom – they were incapable of understanding the little that Jesus had taught, let alone the rest of

the story. In addition, the work of redemption hadn't been completed, so they would have to wait until the coming of the Holy Spirit to learn the many things they would need to know.

While Jesus was speaking expressly to the eleven apostles here, the principle applies to us today. Recall that Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians that he had to speak to them as *"babes"* because they were spiritually and morally incapable of being spoken to as spiritual grownups. They were carnal. They still thought of Christ and the church as fleshly and worldly, which is true of many in the church today.

But what was it that they could not bear? Well, for one thing, it was what we call "the Great Commission" Jesus gave after His resurrection and before His ascension. *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:18-20).

And there was more, but that would come to them through the Holy Spirit, who would arrive on the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. By that time, they would be able to bear whatever they were directed to do by the Holy Spirit. Their understanding would be complete.

IN CLOSING...

There's a lot of misunderstanding about the Holy Spirit's work today. Some people want the Spirit to function in us and through us the same way He did in and through the apostles, but He doesn't do that. The apostles were able to lay hands on people and impart the Spirit's powers to them, but it stopped there.

Today, the Spirit lives in baptized believers to produce the fruit of joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control, and to bring Scripture to remembrance and to empower us to live a committed Christian life.

We have all been given ministry or functional gifts by the Holy Spirit, which are prophecy or proclamation, service, teaching, exhortation, giving or generosity, leadership, and mercy.