

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit – Part III
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John 16:4-15
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 16, the 16th Chapter of the Gospel of John. We are resuming a series that I last preached on May 10th, Mother's Day. It has been three weeks, or actually four weeks since I've been in the pulpit. It is good to be back. Patti and I, Maggie and John, had a wonderful time, vacation. I appreciate your prayers for us. It's good to be home though. It's always good to come home, isn't it? No matter where you are, you enjoy it, in some ways you wish you could stay longer, but when you really get home you are like, "Ah, this is where I belong." It feels that way in the house, but it feels even more that way in the family of God, with the people of God. We are so glad to be home today with you.

The title of the message is 'The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit – Part III', and we are looking at John 16, the first 15 verses. Really, particularly, Verses 5-15, and we've used that a little bit as a starting point to look back over some of the things Jesus has been saying about the Holy Spirit throughout the passage. One of the things that is such an encouragement to me from this passage, one of the things that comes through so clearly is the relevance, and urgent need of sound doctrine and theology. The church has been hijacked in the last decades by folks that are just always talking about relevance, and trying to relate to an unbelieving world, and show them how hip we are as Christians, that we're not that different than them, and all this kind of nonsense. But the most relevant thing in the world, in reality, is to know who God is.

And so Jesus, in the last night before His crucifixion, is talking with His disciples in a time where if anybody needed practical help, it was they. The eleven that are still in the room with Him, and then walking with Him on the way to the garden, they need practical help. They are about to undergo a firestorm spiritually, emotionally. They can't possibly understand what is going to happen as the shepherd is struck, and they are to be scattered. They are going to experience the horror of seeing the Son of God become an offering for sin, and then they are going to spend the rest of their lives taking the message of that resurrected Savior into a world that is hostile to them. So Jesus is telling them the essential message that He has in His '*Farewell Discourse*', in Chapters 13-17, "I'm going away. You are going to experience all kinds of difficulty, opposition, persecution, and I'm not going to be here with you." That is a tough message.

So what He does in the midst of that though is tell them, “It is better for you that I go.” The passage we’re going to look at in a moment, “It is better for you that I go, because if I go, I will send the Holy Spirit.” So what He does is He talks about the various challenges they face. In Chapter 14, He starts off saying, “I’m going away, but you should rejoice, I’m going to prepare a place for you.” But He says, “Though your hearts are troubled, don’t let your hearts be troubled,” and in the middle of that discussion, how does He comfort them? He tells them in Verse 16 of Chapter 14, “I’m going to send the Comforter,” or, “I’m going to send the Helper, the Holy Spirit.” And from Verse 16 of Chapter 14, all the way through Verse 27, He talks about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. “I’m going away, but here is the Holy Spirit.”

Then in Chapter 15, Verses 18-25, He tells them, “The world is going to hate you. You are going to experience intense opposition everywhere you go,” and in the midst of that, what does He say? In Verse 26 of Chapter 15, “But the Helper is coming,” and He spends those two verses, 26 and 27, continuing to tell them about the Holy Spirit. Then Chapter 16, Verse 1-4, He says, “Listen, things are going to be amazingly bad at times. They are going to turn you over, to put you to death, and think they are doing God a service. That is how black the darkness is going to be spiritually,” Verses 1-4. Then what does He do to comfort them? Verses 5-15, He says, “Let me tell you about the Holy Spirit.” And so the person and work of the Holy Spirit is so important for us to understand as we encounter trials and challenges in our lives. So let’s read the word of God together, John 16:1-15.

John 16:1-15 ~ “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. 2 They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. 3 These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. 4 But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. 5 “But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

12 “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we come this morning asking that the Spirit which You have placed into the heart of every true believer, that You might work through Your Spirit in our hearts this morning. Open our eyes, open our minds, open our hearts, and transform us with Your truth. Holy Spirit, have Your way in us, that Jesus Christ might be lifted up. We pray this in His name, Amen.

We’re looking at ‘The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit’, and I said this is our third message on that. We started out two times ago looking at the person of the Holy Spirit, that He is the third person of the Trinity, is a person, personal, relational, loving, and we need to see Him that way. He is fully divine. Then we began to talk about the work of the Holy Spirit, and we come today to the third aspect of His work that we want to look at, and that is encapsulated in the word, the Holy Spirit is our ‘advocate’. That is the subject we’re looking at this morning. The Holy Spirit is our advocate. We’re going to see that that has tremendous relevance for our lives.

You know, I don’t know about you, but from time to time I get very discouraged. I’ve had to limit how much time I listen to talk radio, or watch TV news, and stuff. It is because if you fill your mind with that too much it is just discouraging. The culture is just seeming to go down at a greater and greater pace, accelerating down into darkness. And while we see that, we shouldn’t be discouraged as Christians because we know that greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. But we forget, and so we limit ourselves, but you know, you see it in so many ways. Do you ever feel like, and you think about the culture, and we’re just too far gone, there is no hope? I mean, this thing that has been celebrated the last few weeks, the former Olympic gold-medalist, Bruce Jenner. Amazing deception and delusion this man is under, and what rebellion he is expressing against God. God is the one who made us, not we ourselves. We don’t determine our sex, God does, but the delusion of that, and then the culture celebrating it, applauding his courage. This is when what Paul talked about when he said, “They will call good evil, and evil good.” In

darkness like that it is our tendency to feel hopeless, and it is our temptation to be afraid. We are tempted to retreat into silence and to move away from the lost. Not just in the global perspective, or culture perspective, but when we see unbelievers around us, and we begin to engage them, and when we talk to them, and we see they are imbibing these crazy ideas. How often I've felt, in talking to someone, the temptation, or the thought goes across my mind, "I can't get there from here with you. You are so far in the dark, it feels like there is no way to get there." I have to remember, "Wait a minute, that is not biblical thinking. It feels like that, it looks like that, but that is not reality."

That is what Jesus is telling them, "Listen, the world is opposed to you," His disciples, the 11, they were looking at a world that was blacker in darkness than what we see. We are getting closer and closer to what they were in, but they were in a world that was incredibly dark. They must have been, when they heard Jesus was going, their hearts must have just been overwhelmed. As He continues to say, "You are filled with sorrow," even in this passage. They are overwhelmed with sorrow, they are discouraged, they are disillusioned. Him leaving, and they are going to experience opposition. They are going to be tempted to be silent. They are going to be tempted to retreat. They are going to be tempted to move away from the lost. But He gives them the promise of the Spirit so that they will know that the one that is coming to indwell them at Pentecost, is the one who will empower them, and will work mightily through them to lift up Christ, and to transform the darkness into light around them. He basically says, "What you need to do when you are feeling the tendency to want to retreat, when you are feeling the tendency to disillusionment and despair, when you are feeling the temptation to be silent when you should speak, remember the one that is in you, what His person and work of the Holy Spirit is all about, and then proceed on in confidence." See how incredibly practical theology is, how important it is to know that the Lord of hosts is with us when it looks like the world is falling apart around us.

Now, as we look at this, I want to point out, Jesus says in the passage, He is telling them that the Holy Spirit is going to convict the world concerning sin and righteousness in judgment. We are really focusing on Verses 7-11 in this message. We'll look at the concept of the Holy Spirit being our advocate. The key word, the first key word is the word '*Helper*' again in Verse 7, ***...if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.*** The '*Helper*' is the word '*paraclete*', or '*paráklētos*' in Greek, and it is translated '*Helper*'. I am taking an aspect of that word's semantic range. It is a very rich and full word. It means, '*one who is called alongside, called to one's aid*' and it pictures help, assistance, support. That is why you have the various translations—Helper,

Comforter, Counselor. He is one who is called alongside to aid us, and there are various nuances that Jesus is working out in these passages about the Holy Spirit, but the one we want to focus on in Verses 8-11 is that He is called alongside to serve as our advocate.

We've looked at the Holy Spirit as our guide, the Holy Spirit as one making a home for God in us, the same way Jesus made a home for us in Heaven, the Holy Spirit continues His work by making a home for God in us. Today we look at the Holy Spirit as our advocate. Now a key part of the meaning of this word that I think Jesus is focusing on here in this passage is, the legal overtones of the word, the '*paraclete*', the '*Helper*', could be an advocate, and often was an advocate in legal context in the 1st Century. I hesitate to use the word '*lawyer*', that's not really right. The way we think of lawyers isn't exactly what a paraclete was, but if you were in court, you were charged with a crime, the paraclete would come and defend you, but not as a paid counsel like we have today, someone who has been through law school. The paraclete was one who had a close personal relationship with you, and came to stand as someone who loves you, and knows you, to vouch for you, and to defend you.

So it is a relational defense though, but there was this aspect of defending. We need someone to defend us, and the context of what Jesus is talking about in the '*Farewell Discourse*', all the opposition the disciples are going to experience from the world, they need someone to defend them. So He presents the Holy Spirit as the one who will come to your aid, come to your side, and will stand with you, and defend you, and He is your close personal friend. He is your advocate. So He says, "The Helper, when He comes, will convict the world, and how He defends, He defends us against the world." '*The world*', the word that is used throughout John, a key word for John in his Gospel, '*kósmos*', is '*the mass of humanity in active opposition to God*'. It is the mass of people in active opposition to God. There is almost a military connotation in the way John uses the word at times, that the world is at war with God, when he uses the phrase '*the world*'. In fact, the word '*kosmeo*', the verb from which '*kósmos*' comes from, was often used in a military context. It means '*to order, to arrange*', sometimes used as a general arranges his troops, disposes his troops for battle. And so Jesus says, "The Holy Spirit will come, and He will be your advocate, and He will convict the world. He will stand with you against the world, against the opposition of the world. You see the rulers and powers are orchestrating in our sinful world against us, and against God, but the Holy Spirit stands with you."

The world system is the values, and beliefs, and thought forms of the world, governed and orchestrated by Satan, gladly accepted by sinful men. You think about, as we were talking earlier about Bruce Jenner, what you see there is the outworking of the world system. You see a man deceived by Satan, you see a man deceived by his own sin nature in rebellion against God, but you also see a man who has imbibed the values, and the beliefs of this present darkness, this present world order where the ruler of this world, as Jesus refers to Satan three times in the last several chapters, the ruler of this world is orchestrating those values and beliefs. You see a man overwhelmed by that, and we see that around us, and it is an impressive adversary, the world system. Culturally it is impressive, but when you think about a small picture, when you are witnessing to someone, if you had the opportunity to talk to somebody like Bruce Jenner, you see the spiritual deception, the lies that have captivated him, the forces of darkness have such a firm grip upon him. It seems hopeless to share with somebody like that, that is so far gone. The defenses are too formidable, the darkness is too thick it appears, and Jesus says, “Wait a minute, remember the Holy Spirit, the one that I am sending to you. He is able to come to your aid. He is able to pierce the darkness. He is able to destroy and pull down every stronghold and fortress. He is your advocate. He stands with you against the world, and He is able.

Now what He does, I want to think about the remainder of our time under four questions, outline the rest of our time under four questions. First, *What will He do?* Secondly, *How will He do it?* Thirdly, *What does this look like?* And fourthly, *How will we see the effects?*

1) What Will He Do?

So first of all, *What will He do?* What will the Holy Spirit do when He comes? Key word ‘*convict*’ there in Verse 8, He **...will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;** To ‘*convict*’ means ‘*to convince, to reprove, to expose, to bring to light*’. It has the idea and the connotation of shame. It means to bring to someone’s attention something they had not seen before, but to convince them of error to the point where there is shame. The Holy Spirit has the power to do this, and the Holy Spirit, when He comes, will do this, Jesus says. He will prove that the world is in the wrong, He will expose and enlighten. He will do that concerning three things. He will convict them regarding three things—the true nature of sin, see it is concerning sin, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment. He will help the world to understand rightly what sin is, to help them understand rightly what righteousness is, to help them understand rightly the judgment of God. See men don’t understand these things correctly. That is why

they are in the dark, misunderstandings of these three issues are what keep them trapped, and the Holy Spirit will convict them.

2) How Will He Do It?

Now, *How will He do it?* Second question, *How will He do it?* How will He convict them? When we put this all together in the larger context, He will do it by the extension of His essential ministry and purpose. What is His basic ministry? What does the Holy Spirit do? What we see as we look through this passage, the larger passage is, the Holy Spirit's basic ministry is to put the spotlight on Jesus Christ. His ministry, we see in Verse 14, He will, when He comes, what will He do? ***He will glorify Me...*** That's how you know when the Holy Spirit is working because Jesus Christ is being glorified. When the Spirit is at work, Christ is the center. We see this also in Chapter 15:26, He says:

John 15:26 ~ "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

"He is going to offer solemn testimony about Me." When He comes to advocate for you, there you are surrounded by the world, feeling like you are overwhelmed, you are alone. Isn't it funny how, I know how when I fly on an airplane, I always feel like if I don't know a believer with me already, then I'm the only Christian on the plane. Do you ever feel like that? Lost person, lost person, lost person, and you are surprised if God sits you beside a Christian, and you have good fellowship with somebody. Usually it is you are ready to take on the forces of darkness in a witnessing encounter, right? And we should be, but the Lord has His people, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit though, is to put the flood light, we feel like we are surrounded by unbelievers, and largely we are, often. The whole mass of the world system is against us, but the Holy Spirit is our advocate, and He comes and stands alongside us, and He defends us. And the way He defends us, how does He defend us? He defends us by lifting up Jesus Christ. He lifts up Christ.

J.I. Packer, in his book Keep in Step with the Spirit, uses a helpful illustration of the floodlight. He said that the Holy Spirit, you can understand the Holy Spirit's ministry in the same way you can understand the function of a floodlight. A floodlight is placed somewhere, not so that you notice the floodlight. The floodlight's ministry is to cast light upon something else, and the Holy Spirit's ministry is to cast light upon Jesus. He is constantly saying, "Look at Christ. Look at Jesus." And so when He is at work in a ministry, or in someone's life, they love

Jesus, they love to talk about Christ, they love to lift up the cross, and the resurrection. And a beautiful thing about just the relationship of the Trinity, there is such an astonishing, breathtaking beauty of their interrelationship. You think about this—how each person of the Trinity loves to lift up the other. Jesus, throughout this Gospel, is constantly saying things like, “The Son can do nothing. He does only what He sees the Father doing. The works you see Me doing, these are the works of the Father.” So He is saying, “Look at the Father.” What does the Father do at the baptism and the Mount of Transfiguration? The voice cries out of Heaven, “This is My Son, whom I love, listen to Him. Look at Him. Listen to Him,” and Jesus, as He prepares to taste the cross, the agony of suffering for our sins, what does He say? “Listen, it is good for you that I go. Look at the Holy Spirit, He is coming.” And when the Holy Spirit comes, what does He do? He says, “Keep looking at Jesus.” Amazing reciprocity of affection and esteem, it is there in the persons of God in the Godhead.

So what He does is He convicts. How does He do it? He shines the light on Jesus Christ. And what does that look like in practice? And that is what He gives us in Verses 9-11. What does it look like in practice? How does He defend us and convict the world? How does He deal with those unassailable, seemingly unassailable defenses that Satan has erected in the lives of unbelievers? How does the Holy Spirit overcome those areas of bondage that are keeping people in the dark? We see this in these three successive verses, Verses 9, 10, and 11. Now, what the Holy Spirit does, He lifts up Jesus Christ, and by lifting up Christ, what He does is He exposes the true nature of sin. By lifting up Christ, He exposes the true nature of righteousness. And by lifting up Christ, He exposes the true, inescapable reality of judgment. It’s the lifting up of Jesus that brings about each of these things and breaks down the strongholds of Satan in the lives of the lost, in the lives of even believers who are struggling. It’s always lifting up Christ. Now, first of all, concerning sin:

John 16:8-9 ~ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;

He’s going to take people who are locked in darkness and who are deceived and deluded in various ways, and how does He bring them to salvation? Well, He lifts up Christ in such a way that they see their sin as it really is. It is the presence and the reality of the teaching of Christ that exposes sin. We see this in Verse 9:

John 16:9 ~ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;

He says, “Listen, the reason that they will see the essence of sin...” we have to look at each of these verses, because at first glance, it’s kind of hard to tell. He’s going to convict the world concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me.

John 16:10 ~ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

Each of the second clauses in those verses explain the first. He’s going to convict the world concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me. How does that go together? Well, the world tends to have a shallow view of sin. We as believers struggle with continuing to have a shallow view of sin, but the unsaved have a radically wrong view of sin. Men say things like, “To err is human. To forgive, divine. It’s not that big a deal really. It’s just human to sin.” What the Bible says about sin and what the Bible says about sinners is sin is rebellion. It’s cosmic rebellion. It is active hatred of God. The Bible says that those who are still in their sins are at enmity with God (Romans 8:7). They’re at war with God, that they truly hate Him.

Now, if you tell that to an unbeliever, they say, “I don’t hate God. I love God.” They don’t understand what sin is. But when they look at who Jesus truly is, then their sin is exposed, because the essence of sin is not just to miss the mark. The essence and root of sin is to rebel against God. It’s a rejection, an active rejection of God and His right to rule your life. That’s what happened in the Garden of Eden. In the Garden of Eden, they sinned because they rejected God and His right to rule their life. They doubted His character, and so they repudiated Him in sin. All sin is really a repudiation of God. It’s a hatred of God. People says, “No, it’s not. I don’t really actively hate God.”

Well, if you keep lifting up Christ to someone who says that, if you show them the Person of Jesus, if you show them the wonder of what He’s done, if you show them the glory of His righteousness, if you show them the glory of His claims that He makes on their lives—Jesus is the Son of God, the eternal Son of God, the perfect, spotless Lamb, and He claims absolute authority over your life. He says that you need to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me. He says that if you don’t love Me so much that it appears that you hate everyone else, you’re not worthy of Me. This is the Jesus of the Bible. When you make that clear to someone who says, “I don’t hate God, hey, I’m okay with Jesus, I think He’s alright,” if you keep pressing that home, you will find out they hate Jesus Christ and they hate God, because the sinful heart of man, all of us before we were saved, we wanted to

live life our own way. The one thing we hated was to not be in charge of our life. We see it in the tiniest little child. Isn't it amazing? You don't have to have—there are no classes. You don't have to train your child on how to learn to disobey. It just comes naturally. "Don't do this." The existence of the command prompts in the child—isn't it amazing, they're little kids and their brain development, it happens in stages. They can't understand certain things. You can't begin to deal with complex matters, and yet, "Don't do this," something happens in the heart. "I'm going to test that." You can see such defiance in the eyes of a 2-year-old. I mean evil in this precious child.

Well, that evil comes out when you press the Person and work of Christ, and you lift Him up to someone, and you show who He is and what He claims, related to that person, the Person of Jesus Christ claims to somebody like Bruce Jenner, "You don't have the right to determine your sex. I already did. You may be struggling with all kinds of sinful feelings and sinful confusion, but the answer is not to give into your lust. The answer is to repent and to place your faith in Me." That's your only hope, and when you press that home to someone, someone like that who says, "I don't hate God," they suddenly hate the God that you're presenting. The reason they think they don't hate God is because they're worshiping an idol. They don't hate their idol. They hate the true God of the Bible.

So what happens then, someone in that darkness, they think they're okay. They think they're okay with God, and they need to be delivered. How do you get there from here? You lift up Jesus Christ, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit accompanying your words, as you try to share Scripture, you try to share your faith with someone, the Spirit of God when He chooses will work to bring about conviction of sin to see that sin really is a hatred of God. "I've wanted to live my life my own way." When someone is suddenly gripped by that, that is the work of the Holy Spirit. It can't happen any other way. So what does it look like? First of all, concerning sin, and secondly, concerning righteousness, Verse 10:

John 16:10 ~ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;

So He's going to convict the world concerning righteousness, because, "I go to the Father and you no longer see Me." How does that go together? How does the first part have to do with the second? He's saying, "The Holy Spirit when He comes will convict the world concerning righteousness, because I'm gone. I'm no longer visible." He's saying basically, "My ministry when I was here was to show the nature of true righteousness," that when Jesus came, the world suddenly had an

opportunity to see what real righteousness is the way God defines it. Now here again, the problem is as unbelievers we're so far in the dark that we don't have an idea of sin or righteousness. Most people think they're fairly righteous. It's amazing how you talk to people or you see surveys—people are surveyed, “What do you believe about the Bible? What do you believe about Christ? Do you believe there is a heaven or a hell?” Even if they say they don't believe in heaven or hell, you ask them, “Are you going there?” and they say, “Yes.” “Why?” “Because I'm a pretty good person. My good outweighs my bad.” They have a wrong view of righteousness. Righteousness is to be right with God, to be according to His standard, and God's standard of righteousness is radically different than our human standard. What has to happen for someone to be saved is they have to see sin as it truly is, but they also have to see righteousness as it truly is. The Holy Spirit's ministry is to do just that.

He has come. Now that Jesus is gone, Jesus is at the right hand of God, that the Holy Spirit's ministry is to continue to point toward Christ by the word of God, as people preach Christ, the word of Christ, lift up Jesus, and the Holy Spirit then makes them able to see what righteousness really is. Look at Jesus. But then He also works through the lives of believers, the Holy Spirit now being present in your life if you've repented, turned from your sins, and placed your faith in the all-sufficient work of Jesus Christ on the cross. If you believe He paid for your sins, He rose from the dead, then you have the Spirit in you, and God is making you day by day, sanctifying you to make you more like Jesus. And so as we go about our lives just trying to live faithful to God, growing in grace, we're being transformed into His image little by little by the work of the Holy Spirit.

So what happens is when you're relating to people around you, they get to see glimpses of what righteousness is in your life, and then you get to preach about Jesus, and they get to see what righteousness really ultimately is in the Person of Christ. And that shows them that listen, whatever they've been trusting in comes far short of the reality of what God requires. I mean, when you show them what it is to be a godly husband, to pursue purity in your marriage, it shows how vacuous and empty so many marriages are in this area, because men think that, “I've not committed adultery,” or something. Some man says that, but look at his life compared to the life of a believer who's growing in grace. We have to fight against sin all of us, but the believer is growing in holiness, and that gap between our lives and their lives is an evidence that they're not right, and the Spirit uses that to show the beauty and the superiority of God's way.

There was something that happened yesterday and I was just struck by it. During the ceremony, I mentioned the wedding of Amelia and Will yesterday. To see the beauty of when God brings together two people who really love Him, and who have been disciplined well, brought up to love Him and their families, and are uniting their lives to bring glory to Him, it's just so beautiful. And in the ceremony I was thinking and praying for those that might be here that weren't believers, folks that probably think like imbibing the culture and even buying the lies of the Bruce Jenner kind of nonsense. "Hey, it's up to us to determine how we live. It's up to us to just do the best we can, to go with our feelings." You see the culture going that way, and then to experience what we experienced yesterday where we talked about the design of marriage is God's idea. God makes a man and God makes a woman, and that's the only way you find completion—man, male and female. And then you hear two people who love Jesus, and you see it lifted up, the glory of Christ, and the beauty of marriage, and the beauty of His design, and how marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. I thought after we were done, how could anybody not be transfixed by the gap between the drivel and darkness they've been living in and the glory of what God has made?

That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lifts up righteousness. Through the word of God and through the work of Christ in our lives, the Holy Spirit lifts up righteousness so that people around us see that's the way a man is intended to live. That's the way a mother is intended to be. And we're not perfect. We're still failing, and falling, and faltering, but by God's grace, getting better. But compared to where we were, look at the distance. Think about where you were before Jesus saved you. Some of you were saved as children and the distance is harder to see, but some of you were saved as adults, and you were saved out of various levels of wickedness and sinfulness. But think about how far you've come by His grace, how different you are. That is the work of the Spirit of the living God, and that is a powerful, powerful impact and testimony to a lost world.

So that's what Jesus is saying. "Listen, understand. The Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness," and then concerning finally judgment. Men also have a low view of judgment. The same way they have a low view of sin and a low view of righteousness, they have a low view of judgment. They really don't expect to be judged. They think God's going to be okay with them. Heed the words of Psalm 50:21 where the Lord says to the people of Israel, "You thought that I was altogether like you," God is not like us. He is holy and He will punish sin, and He's determined to judge every infraction against His holy Law, and the proof of it is again here in the end of the verse, concerning judgment. How will He transform their understanding of sin? By lifting up Christ.

How will He transform their understanding of righteousness? By lifting up Christ. How will He transform their understanding of judgment? By lifting up Christ. When you lift up Jesus and particularly the cross, what you do is you confirm the reality of judgment. When you lift up the cross and you explain it correctly, that we preach Christ and Him crucified, the thing that we glory in above every else is that God sent His Son into the world to live a perfect life, and He lived a perfect life of righteousness. And then God put Him as the Lamb of God upon the cross and credited the sins of everyone who would ever believe, to His account, and poured out His wrath to the full. Jesus drank the full cup of the wrath of God for everyone who would ever believe, and that's why you see the agony, the physical agony of the cross. That's why you see the spiritual agony where the Son of God is in some sense separated from the favor of the Father. That's why He dreaded and trembled before the cross, and asked Him, "Father, if there be any other way, let this cup pass from Me." He asked the Lord that three times in His humanity, the awesome reality hanging before Him. It was too much to contemplate, and yet He continued to say, "Yet not My will, but Thy will be done," and He went to the cross.

When you understand that that's what happened, that that's how God feels about sin, and the only way to be saved is to be in Christ, it shows you that if you're not in Christ, if you're rejecting Jesus Christ, you're going to feel the full weight of the wrath of God. He is committed to punishing evil. He doesn't wink. He's not like us. He's not altogether like us. We think He could pardon sin. He doesn't pardon sin without punishing it in a substitute. He is holy, and the cross proves it, and the judgment of the cross proved it, because He judged the ruler of this world in the cross and the resurrection. He judged him, and defeated him, and ruled over him, and He has proved His holiness and His determination to judge all who belong to Him. Finally the last question:

3) How Does This Affect Others?

How will we see this work out? Basically, there are two things that happen. When you lift up Jesus Christ in the power of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, something is going to happen. Now, a lot of times what happens is imperceptible to us, but it doesn't mean that nothing happened. A lot of times the Lord is working in someone's heart, and He's breaking down strongholds in them, but you can't see it outwardly. And it may take another six or seven people to share with that person before the real breakthrough finally happens. But each time was like a sledgehammer hammering against the hardness of their heart. And you lifting up Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit was a part of that process.

Sometimes the ministry of the Holy Spirit brings glory to God by hardening the unbeliever. They see the glory of God in your life, they hear some part of the message that you share with them about the glory of Jesus, you lift up Christ in a holy life and with words of truth, and they're hardened. That's to the glory of God, and we should not hesitate to lift up Christ for fear of hardening someone. That's His business, and He's glorified in exercising His wrath. But other times we are going to see the Lord do the work that He did when He sent the Holy Spirit in the first place in Acts 2, to bring a person to conviction and repentance, when He smashes all of the idols, all of the fortresses that are keeping them locked up, at once. You see this in Acts 2. Turn over to Acts 2 for just a moment, to when the Holy Spirit is given. Jesus is saying, "When the Holy Spirit comes..." and we see when He came in Acts 2.

Acts 2:1 ~ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Now, think about their circumstances. They just saw Jesus crucified. They're about to experience all kinds of opposition, continued opposition from the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin. They're going to be pursued by unbelievers. They live in a world that is dark and they feel like they can't get there from here. They're at Pentecost, the Jewish feast, and the city is filled with Jews who are completely in the dark spiritually, and who would feel like, "It's utterly hopeless. We keep sharing with people and they just don't believe." But look what happens. The Holy Spirit comes.

Acts 2:4 ~ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

They were able to speak in the languages of the people that are there, this one-time act of God, to be able to speak to Jews in their own tongue to show the glory of God. Verse 14:

Acts 2:14 ~ But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. 15 For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

He goes on to begin to preach Christ. Verse 22:

Acts 2:22 ~ “Men of Israel, listen to these words: ...

And then he lifts up Jesus. What does the Holy Spirit do when He comes on the scene? He lifts up Jesus.

... Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross...

He basically says, “You don’t think you’re a sinner? You don’t think you hate God? What did you do when God revealed Himself? You who say you’re Jews and who love the God of the Bible, when the God of the Bible revealed Himself as He did in Jesus, fully exeging the character of God, the full radiance of His glory, what did you do? You nailed Him to a cross. That’s the reality of your sin.”

Acts 2:24 ~ But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Verse 33:

Acts 2:33 ~ Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

Verse 36:

Acts 2:36 ~ Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

He lifts up Christ. “Look at who Jesus is.” And look at what happens in Verse 37:

Acts 2:37 ~ Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

That’s what happens when the Holy Spirit chooses to work savingly in the life of someone you witness to. It doesn’t matter how dark the darkness was when you found them. “It’s not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord.” When we take the word of God armed with the Spirit of God, there is nothing that God can’t do.

So as the days get darker around us, what are we supposed to do? We're supposed to keep living righteous and godly lives by the power of the Spirit, to show and to lift up Jesus in our righteousness, and we're to look for opportunities to express and teach about the wonder of His Person and His work, to lift up Jesus. And when we do that, when you make that your purpose, you find the Holy Spirit is with you. When you make your purpose to lift up Jesus, you are right where He wants you to be, and there's nothing that can stop you when God determines to work savingly.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Father, we thank You for the gift of the Spirit. We thank You that You have chosen to make sinful people like us fit vessels for You to dwell in, to take up residence in, to make us a physical temple for You. We're thankful, Lord, that no matter what circumstances surround us, we know that the One who is within us is greater than the one that opposes us. Father, give us eyes to see and ears to hear more and to understand more fully the reality of all that You have done for us in Christ, and all that You have given to us in the Holy Spirit. Make us people who are mighty in the Spirit, mighty in the Scriptures.

Father, we pray for those that are here today that need to repent and believe, that You might work in their hearts even now to show them the reality of their sin, the inadequacy of their righteousness, and the inevitability of their judgment. But then, Lord, show them the glory of the Savior who is a safe harbor and a refuge, and who says to them even now, "Come unto Me, you who are weary and heavy laden." Let them flee to Christ. And Lord, keep us as those who have been bought with Your blood, continually fleeing to Jesus, running to our Savior. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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