

## WHEN THE SPIRIT COMES

John 15:26-27, 16:7-15

Some of the most misunderstood elements of Christian doctrine are those teachings centering around the Holy Spirit and His role in the life of the believer. Nevertheless, His function is one of the most important things for us to understand if we are to be effective in becoming who God intends us to be and effective in carrying out the work of the Kingdom of God in leading people to salvation. Jesus had taught His disciples about the importance of their being vitally connected to Him in the same way that branches are connected to a vine. He continued to teach them about the means by which the oneness they will have with Him actually happens. The Agent by which we are connected to the Vine is the Holy Spirit Who gives life to and empowers the Christian. Jesus called Him the Helper or Comforter which is something that all of us need because life can be difficult and challenging. The disciples of Jesus would all encounter many challenges during their lives since they would be rejected and persecuted by the world. Jesus gave His disciples specific warning that they would be put out of the synagogues and even killed.

Jesus had used the allegory of “vine and the branches” to emphasize the importance of bearing fruit (fruit of the Spirit, fruit of grace, and fruit of righteousness) as evidence of our connectedness to the “true vine.” At the conclusion of this allegory, He twice repeated the New Commandment (love one another as I have loved you) that He had given them earlier that evening. Immediately following the emphasis on “love,” He then warned them of the “hatred” (from the world system) that would be directed against them and what they would be doing as they followed the way Jesus had shown them. That was and is a disconcerting (if not frightening) message; however, they and we would not be alone in dealing with this hatred.

### Testify – 15:26-27

<sup>26</sup>“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, <sup>27</sup>and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning. John 15:26-27 (NASB95)

The plan and purpose of God are from “before the beginning.” Consequently, Jesus knew the next step (following His going away) would be the coming of the Holy Spirit to His believers. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is multifaceted. As implied by various translation of the name Jesus used, the Holy Spirit will be there to comforter, counsel, represent us, and to help us. He will reveal truth to us and be in unity with the Father (this is a continuation of the work Jesus was doing).

His messages of comfort, help and advocacy and the truth He reveals all point to and reinforce the claims of Jesus. In other words, He would be providing or giving testimony (primarily to the followers of Jesus and coincidentally to the world system) related to Jesus. This is also what the disciples would be doing as they interacted with each other and those in the world. In a very real sense, our mission in life is the same as the mission of the Holy Spirit. We will later see that the means and methods attributable to the Holy Spirit are the same as what would be reasonably expected from true followers of Christ. Since the Holy Spirit will not only be with us (One Who comes along side) but will be in us, then we too are enabled and must bear witness of what we have seen (experienced) with Jesus.

Chapter sixteen begins with Jesus explaining why the disciples needed to know all these things He was teaching them in these final hours before His arrest. We find the explanation to be a very practical reason. In today’s vernacular we might say that the reason was to keep them from being “tripped up.” The KJV version uses the word offended and most other translations are related

to barriers or stumbling blocks that would keep a person from their goals or objectives. The Greek word is “skandalidzo” from which we get the English word “scandalize.” However, the modern day idea of scandalize is very different from the intent of the usage in the Greek.

When our expectations are not fulfilled, then we can become disappointed and discouraged. However, if we realize that problems we encounter are expected as a result of our living in a “fallen world,” then we develop resolve to overcome them and not become discouraged or give up. Many people come to Christ believing they will have no problems and when troubles show up, then they abandon their belief in God and look for some other remedy or source of salvation. What Jesus said would happen to His followers is exactly what happened to Him. The Jewish leaders thought they were doing the right thing when they had Jesus arrested and killed. Later on, Saul of Tarsus went about having Christian arrested and jailed because he thought that he was pleasing God. In both cases, these people did not know the Father or the Son.

What is the alternative to letting the “barriers” we encounter cause us to abandon our goals? Consider what happens with a sports team such as when a college football team plays a game. Their object is to advance the ball down the field and cross the goal line to score points. Usually, this objective is hindered by an opposing team. Does the team with the ball conclude that because there are opposition and barriers that they should just quit? No! They know that the opposition is going to be there and they prepare themselves physically and mentally for what they might encounter so they can accomplish the goal in spite of the opposition.

#### Convicts – 16:7-11

<sup>7</sup>“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. <sup>8</sup>“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup> and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; <sup>11</sup> and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. John 16:7-11 (NASB95)

Jesus had delayed telling them about the opposition as clearly as He was now telling them since time was literally running out and they needed the extra learning time to be able to appreciate the significance of what He was teaching them. Even in spite of putting off the “bad news” that He was leaving as long as He did, they still had not grasped enough of the “big picture” to ask meaningful questions regarding where He was going. We know that earlier that evening Peter and Thomas had raised the question of where Jesus was going, but they were thinking about physical locations and had not connected this to the spiritual reality of what Jesus was teaching them.

What the disciples thought was “bad news” regarding Jesus going away was, in reality, the heart of the “good news” in that the power they needed to accomplish the goals of the Kingdom of God was going to be made available to them.

This discussion was another opportunity for the disciples to ask and learn more of the kingdom of God and to discover what Jesus meant about His going away. They were so focused on the present and the perceived losses and problems that they could not think clearly. Another consideration is that they were facing a completely new paradigm and they did not know enough to ask really meaningful questions. It is difficult to imagine the uncertainty they had at that point. Here we are on the other side of the cross and some two thousand years later and what may seem obvious to us was very difficult for them.

Why was it necessary for Jesus to “go away” before the Holy Spirit would come to empower the church? John had stated in chapter 7, verse 39 that “the Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified.” The “glorification” of the Son was evidence of His having completed the

work of salvation He was sent to accomplish. The confirmation of His glorification was the coming of the Spirit as “comforter” and “the spirit of truth.” If Jesus had not “gone away” or died, been buried, resurrection, and ascended, then there would have been no reason to send the Holy Spirit. As John Gill argued, “there would have been no blood to sprinkle, no righteousness to reveal and bring near, no salvation to apply, or any of the things of Christ, and blessing of grace” all of which resulted from the death of Christ.

God has a plan and, in that plan, the Holy Spirit of God would come to bring new life and to indwell those who accept the grace gift of Christ dying for our sin and our sins so that we could become new creatures (not born of Adam) but born of the Spirit of God. This could only be done upon the completion of the work of Christ in His first advent after He was glorified in His death on the Cross. Once that work was completed and He had returned to the Father, then the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of believers was to begin. This is good news.

It is important that we understand how the Holy Spirit interacts with and impacts the church and individual believers. It is equally important to understand how He relates to the world of unbelievers. Recall the words of Jesus in the first part of John 14:17 regarding this relationship of the Spirit and the world. “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him.”

Since the Spirit comes to the church and not to the world, how will He convict the world with regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment? Warren Wiersbe (*Bible Exposition Commentary*) points out that the ministry of the Spirit to the world is through the church. The following quote from this commentary is helpful in understanding how the Spirit works in the church.

The Holy Spirit does not minister in a vacuum. Just as the Son of God had to have a body in order to do His work on earth, so the Spirit of God needs a body to accomplish His ministries; and that body is the church. Our bodies are His tools and temples, and He wants to use us to glorify Christ and to witness to a lost world.

Sometimes we hear people pray, “Lord, send Your Spirit to speak to the lost! May the Spirit go from heart to heart.” Such praying is no doubt sincere, but is it biblical? The Spirit does not “float” in some ghostly way up and down the rows of a church building, seeking to win the lost. The Holy Spirit works through the people in whom He lives. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, He empowered Peter to preach; and the preaching of the Word brought conviction to those who heard.

What does it mean “to convict” or “to reprove” a person? The meaning of the Greek word (*elegcho*) is related to such things as “point out a fault for the purpose of correction.” It also implies the idea of bringing wrong actions to light or exposing behavior with an implication of shame for the person convicted. In today’s world, such “reproof” is characterized as “hate speech” by those in the world. In other words, the world will generally reject the conviction or reproof of the Holy Spirit through the church or its individual members. Since so many reject such reproof, the tendency in the church today is to just say nothing. If we do say something, then the world will hate us and persecute us. Is this not exactly what Jesus said would happen in the first few verses of chapter sixteen? Since we have been warned, then we must not let that be a stumbling block.

Most of us are very uncomfortable with the idea that reproof and a call for repentance are the first steps in carrying out the Great Commission that Jesus commanded that we do. Jesus said that the Spirit would convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Sin has its roots in man rejecting God. Without the work of the Holy Spirit a person can become insensitive to sin in his life. If we are concerned about a person who is lost, then the help we need to win him to Christ is the convincing power of the Holy Spirit to bring a consciousness of sin to the lost person. If Warren Wiersbe is right, then we (the church) must be involved so the Holy Spirit can work through us. Unless a person is convinced of sin in his or her life, then there will be no repentance.

Repentance must be followed by “belief” in God’s only provision for salvation which is found in the completed work of Christ. Repentance is not enough since that would be an attempt to achieve salvation through works which does not address the basic problem of the very nature of those who are of the “seed of Adam.”

What about this business of convicting the world of righteousness? You would think that the mission would be to convict the world of **un**righteousness. That is what the conviction with regard to “sin” is about. Whose “righteousness” are we talking about here? The obvious answer is that this is the “righteousness of Jesus the Christ” who is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

We could also make a case that this “convincing” starts with what the world observes in the lives of “believers” or followers of Christ. One of the “reasons” given by many “non believers” for their refusal to accept God’s plan of salvation is that it does not work as evidenced by the “unrighteousness” demonstrated by those who profess that they have been saved. This is why it is so important that we bear the “fruit of righteousness” in our everyday lives which can only happen because Jesus has gone to the Father and the Holy Spirit has come.

As far as the “world” is concerned, they are already judged because of unbelief. (See John 3:18-20.) You may recall the many times people in the media have quoted Pope Francis’ statement regarding those who are involved in homosexual behavior. He said “Who am I to judge?” This is taken as some sort of absolution from the sin of such practices. The truth of the matter is that he does NOT need to judge such things since the Word of God has already pronounced judgment on that behavior. It is judged by God to be an abomination.

A very practical way in which the Holy Spirit brings conviction regarding judgment is through the words and actions of those who are led by the Spirit. One of the arguments that we sometimes hear with regard to obeying the commandments of Christ is that they are just idealization and are really impractical with the proof being that no one turns the other cheek or goes the second mile or is actually producing the fruits of grace. When the world actually encounters a Christian who is practicing these “impractical idealizations,” then that produces conviction that these commandments **can** actually be carried out. If it is possible to obey, then God’s judgment against failure to obey is vindicated.

Convincing the world of Judgment, also refers to the fact that Satan has come under judgment because of the death of Jesus. Satan’s power has been broken and humanity can be set free. This is the Gospel, the Good News, that the world needs to hear and know. The ministry of the Holy Spirit goes even further, He becomes our Teacher and Guide.

### Guides – 16:12-15

<sup>12</sup>“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. <sup>13</sup>“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. <sup>14</sup>“He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. <sup>15</sup>“All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. (NASB)

We cannot learn all there is to know about any subject in an instant. There are certain things that we must understand before we can learn other things. Jesus had only begun to teach the disciples the many things of the Kingdom of God. They were not mature enough to comprehend all they needed to know. The Holy Spirit continues to work with each of us using the word of God to open up our understanding. He does not bring any NEW truth on His own but He does show us the truths that have already been given in a way that we can understand them and when we are mature enough to receive that truth.