

Led by the Spirit / "The Work of the Spirit"

Last week, we were challenged to give up control to the Holy Spirit. Once more, I've gotten some pretty positive responses to that message_ but some pretty interesting questions have been asked of me as well_ especially about the prompting of the Spirit. Let's consider Jesus' own words about the Holy Spirit's work to find some insight. Open your Bibles to John 16. Jesus says there in verse 5... **"Now I am going to Him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'"** ⁶ **Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief.** ⁷ **But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away."** Jesus told His disciples that it was good for Him to leave them. He even went so far as to suggest that they would be better off without Him. That's a hard pill to swallow. How could He possibly expect them to believe it? Read on for the answer. **Jesus said, "Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."**

Jesus was about to finish what He came to do_ be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Once completed, He was going to pass the baton on to another, whom He refers to here as *"the Counselor."* Some versions use the title *"Comforter"* or even *"Advocate."* The Greek term "παρακλητος" is a broad one. It literally means one who comes alongside to help. In verse 26 of the preceding chapter, Jesus says **"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about me."** Hopefully you recall from our study of Acts 2 a couple weeks ago that the Holy Spirit was poured out on all people after Jesus ascended back to heaven. In essence, Jesus was turning over the work He'd begun to the Spirit. Think of it like this: Nina had surgery this week. Once the Physician did her knee replacement, he called in the physical therapist who will work with her for complete restoration. Jesus, the great physician does the heart transplant. The Counselor continues with the work of sanctification.

What unfinished work could this Advocate be doing? That's a good question_ and Jesus gives us the answer. He says in verse 8: **"When He (the Counselor) comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:"** Let that word "convict" sink in. **The Holy Spirit would convict_** pricking the hearts of people, making them fully aware of the reality of their position with God. Some say that this work is limited to confronting those who do not know Jesus_ but if we read on, we'll see that is only part of His mission.

The Holy Spirit would convict some of the very people who rejected Jesus. Verse 9 says: **"He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me."** Again we saw that's what took place at Pentecost. Those who consented to have Jesus crucified were cut to the heart and asked what to do. Moved by the same Spirit, Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and they'd receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit worked from within and without. He continues to do that whenever the good news of Jesus is proclaimed.

The Holy Spirit would also convict those who accepted Jesus. Verse 10 says: **"He will convict in regard to righteousness, because I'm going to the Father, where you can see me no longer."** The Spirit would continually prompt Jesus' disciples to be more like Him. They'd no longer have Jesus to show them how to live, but the Spirit would remind them how He had lived_ and lead them to blaze new paths, setting examples for others to follow in the process. Rather than a visible teacher to imitate, they'd now have an internal teacher to motivate. Jesus was with them most of the time during the 3 years He mentored them. The Spirit would be within them all the time to keep them centered in God's will.

Verse 11 says the Holy Spirit would convict all of the consequences of their choices. The Holy Spirit would convince them of coming **"judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned."** This is a similar affirmation that is made in **John 3:17**. The world was hell bent for destruction. In fact, that's why Jesus came. The Father sent His one and only Son to rescue humanity from an otherwise horrible fate. Not willing that any should perish, He provided the Way of escape. The devil and his angels are destined for hell_ but thanks to Jesus, we do not have to join them. Of course, if we refuse the **Spirit's prompting_ ignore His pleading_ reject His help_ well it grieves my heart deeply to even think of the consequences of that decision. Jesus goes on...¹² I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.¹³ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all 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.¹⁴ He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That's why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.** Jesus now identifies the Counselor as **the Spirit of Truth** who will guide any who will follow Him into all truth. No one can responsibly deny that while Jesus was upon this earth, He was the Master Teacher. No one had ever taught with the wisdom and the authority that He did, But, now, Jesus is about to send them a personal tutor to live with them and to instruct them in matters that He had only touched on. If you are born again, the Holy Spirit is ready and willing to be your teacher.

I did okay in high school_ but tended to excel when I had really good teachers. Still, guess what? If I didn't attend class, or chose to day dream through lectures, I didn't do so well. If I decided to coast through courses, skip classes, or ignore my homework, my grades fell. Much later, I went to seminary with the view of becoming a minister of the Gospel. I was like a sponge, soaking in as much as I could. Still, there were some teachers who captured my interest more than others_ and it seemed as though they helped my aptitude for learning was elevated in their classes.

The Holy Spirit is our Teacher. You can't get a better instructor on earth today than Him. And guess what? Not only will He teach you here at church, He also *"home schools."* In **1st John 2:27** John would write this to believers who were being confronted with some false teaching: **"As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in Him."** The anointing here could not have been referring to the New Testament, for it was still in the process of being written and distributed. Though we are blessed to have the Holy Spirit inspired scriptures today, they did not have access to such. And if we are honest, not all of the scriptures are that easy to interpret. Nor was he speaking merely of the teaching of their peers. In fact, it was some of their peers they were warned to be to guard against.

As I've already intimated, human teachers can be of great benefit_ but that the things of God cannot be conveyed accurately, let alone understood, without the Spirit of God's involvement. Paul writes in **1st Corinthians 2:14-16**: **"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.¹⁵ The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:¹⁶ For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."** Even Paul and the other apostles needed the Spirit of God to discern the things of God. To make spiritual judgments_ to make choices that we know will be in tune with God's will, you need the mind of Christ. The good news is, with the Spirit's help, you can have such discernment.