

159. The Gospel of John—16:5-9

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit—Part 1

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As we have been saying for the past few weeks, *Jesus in Chapters 13 through 16 is giving His farewell address to His disciples before His crucifixion*—which would take place by 9am the next morning.

Their hearts were troubled - primarily because Jesus told them He was going away, and they couldn't go with Him (13:36).

In saying this, **He was in essence telling them that they would have to carry on without Him** - that just because He was going away didn't mean the work of the Kingdom was going to stop.

They would have to continue the work of spreading the gospel and building God's Kingdom in His absence.

Upon hearing this - **their hearts were immediately gripped with fear.**

How could they ever carry on the vital work of spreading the gospel and building God's Kingdom upon the earth without Jesus being with them?

And so, Jesus sensing their troubled hearts said, "**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me**" (14:1) - and then spends most of Chapter 14 comforting and reassuring them by giving them many promises designed to encourage their hearts for the difficult days ahead once He returns to His Father in heaven.

And the main way Jesus encouraged His disciples that evening was by telling them He was not going to leave them alone and helpless like orphans.

Instead, **He promised them He was going to send them another Helper** - the **Holy Spirit** who would abide with them forever (would *never* leave them).

John 14:15-18 (NKJV)

¹⁵ "If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

The Greek word for 'Helper' is 'parakletos' - "**one who comes alongside to help.**"

Jesus was the original "**Helper**" ('Parakletos') Who for 3 ½ years came alongside the disciples to help them in the work of the Kingdom.

Yet now Jesus tells them He's going away - how could they ever carry on the vital work of spreading the gospel without Jesus being with them? And of course, the answer—**that Jesus was going to be with them in another form - in the form of the Holy Spirit** (v.18) **Who is Himself a separate Person in the Trinity or Godhead.**

John 16:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ "But now I go away 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 Nevertheless 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 depart, I will send Him to you.

REFLECTION: How can you spread the gospel and build God's Kingdom without Jesus with you?

So, this begs the question, **why go away at all if He was just going to send them back the exact same Helper to take His place** - God the Spirit in place of God the Son!?

And the answer is that when Jesus was on the earth *physically*, He was limited by that physical body to one place at a time (Galilee, Jerusalem, Jericho etc.)

God is an omnipresent Spirit (John 4:24) and so was Jesus before His incarnation—back then He was called 'The Word' (John 1:1).

But when He became flesh and walked among us, He took on the limitations of that physical body—He got hungry and tired - and was no longer omnipresent ('to be present everywhere at once')

When Jesus returned to the Father and the Holy Spirit was sent back in His place (Pentecost—Acts 2) - the Holy Spirit inhabited every believer in Christ and together they make up one Body - the "Body of Christ."

And once the Holy Spirit took up residence in every believer in Jesus - the Body of Christ would be in many places at once and work more works than He could during His earthly ministry when He was limited to one locality at a time by His physical body.

REFLECTION: How might you explain the term: "the Body of Christ"?

This is exactly what Jesus meant when He told His disciples:

John 14:12 (NKJV)

¹² "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

Of course, Jesus is talking here about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

This morning I want to start a series which I've entitled, "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit."

Alright, just what is the ministry of the Holy Spirit you ask?

Before we look at that very important question—we need to answer an even more basic question—is the Holy Spirit a real person?

I bring this up because several surveys have been taken lately among professing Christians (young adults in particular) who when asked if they believed the Holy Spirit was an actual Person said "No", instead they believed the Holy Spirit emanated from God like light and heat radiate from the sun but that they didn't believe He was in fact a real Person.

In a recent article I came across entitled, "Most adult US Christians don't believe the Holy Spirit is real" the author had this to say:

"Of an estimated 176 million American adults who identify as Christian, just 6% or 15 million of them actually hold a biblical worldview, a new study from Arizona Christian University shows...The study shows, in general, that while a majority of America's self-identified Christians, including many who identify as evangelical, believe that God is all-powerful, all-knowing and is the Creator of the universe—more than half reject a number of biblical teachings and principles, including the existence of the Holy Spirit.

Some 62% of self-identified born-again Christians contend that the Holy Spirit is not a real, living being but is merely a symbol of God's power, presence, or purity. Another 61% say that all religious faiths are of equal value, and 60% believe that if a person is good enough, or does enough good things, they can earn their way into Heaven. All these positions challenge a biblical worldview."

So, I think it's fair to say that we've entered (or at very least 'stepped across the threshold') of the apostasy that the New Testament writers warned us would take hold of the Church in the last days - which includes denying the Person (and ministry) of the Holy Spirit.

Let me say this, I believe the effectiveness, the fruitfulness and the overall dynamic and victory that characterizes your life as a Christian will be directly proportionate to your understanding of the Holy Spirit and how much you honor and obey Him with your life.

REFLECTION: Ask yourself – Do you truly believe in the person of the Holy Spirit? Explain:

So, it behooves us to pay attention to the words of Jesus on the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit in this passage in John 16.

So, let me ask again, **“What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit?”**

Well, it differs in that the ministry of the Holy Spirit to unbelievers is different from the ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers in Christ.

I. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit to the Unbeliever—v.8-11

John 16:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ Nevertheless 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 depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Jesus promised, when He ascended back to His Father, He would send the Holy Spirit into the world (which happened on Pentecost) **“and when He has come”** Jesus said, **“He will convict the world (unbelievers) of 3 things...”**

The key word here is **‘convict’** - which in the Greek is a legal term that means **“to bring to light, to expose, to refute and convince”**— that Greek word could also be translated to **“pronounce the verdict.”**

One author said—

“The world may think that it is judging Christians, but it is the Christians who are passing judgment on the world as they witness to Jesus Christ! Believers are the witnesses, the Holy Spirit is the “prosecuting attorney,” and the unsaved are the guilty prisoners. However, the purpose of this indictment is not to condemn but to bring salvation.”

John 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Conviction is God’s way of showing a person his or her sin - because if they never see themselves as sinners, they will never see their need for a Savior and hence - they will never turn to Jesus to save them.

Now, when we read verse 8 - **“When the Holy Spirit has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”** - we’re prone to apply it to *ourselves*.

In other words, we interpret Jesus’ words as being to me as a Christian—that the Holy Spirit will convict me of *my sins*—the Holy Spirit will convict me of *my lack of righteousness*—the Holy Spirit will convict me of *the coming judgment for my sins*...etc.

But then Jesus went on to interpret what He meant by further revealing to us that all of this conviction of the Holy Spirit has Himself (Jesus) as the focus and not you and me (not directed at Christians but unbelievers).

REFLECTION: What does the “conviction by the Holy Spirit” mean to you and why is it so crucial to your walk with Jesus?

A. Sin - v.9

John 16:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin...⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me...

Sin is a terrible thing - it is an affront to God's holiness.

The word 'sin' is a Greek word that literally means "to miss the mark."

It was an archery term for hitting the bull's eye on a target.

God's Word (Romans 3:23) says that - "*all have sinned (all have missed the mark).*"

Of course, the next question is "*what does the 'mark' or the bull's eye represent?*"

Well, we're not left to guess because Paul goes on to tell us in Romans 3:23—"*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*"

"What is the glory of God?" → It's perfection.

"Yes, but perfection with regard to what?"

The perfection that Paul is referring to in Romans 3:23 - is perfectly keeping God's righteous standards as set forth in His divine law.

In the O.T. God's law contained 613 commandments - to break anyone of them was to miss the mark (sin) and to be guilty before God.

But let's not deal with all 613, let's just limit ourselves to the ten we are most familiar with—the Ten Commandments (not the 10 suggestions).

In that regard, the 'mark' is keeping perfectly all the Ten Commandments of God your entire life without fail.

(James 2:10)

REFLECTION: Thinking of the Ten Commandments – have you personally kept all ten commandments perfectly?

Now, we will all readily admit and acknowledge the fact that people *don't* live and treat others the way God has commanded them, and that this has been the source of many damaged and destroyed lives over the history of mankind - that's true.

And yet Jesus didn't say the Holy Spirit would convict the people of this world of all their 'sins' (plural) as in *lying, cheating, stealing* etc.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would convict unbelievers of 'sin' (singular) - "...because they do not believe in Me." (v.9)

The Holy Spirit is convicting the people of this world of one sin in particular - *the sin of unbelief* - in other words, the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

"So, you're saying that God doesn't care about all the other sins a person commits?"

I didn't say that - the Law of God and the conscience of man will convict the sinner of his or her individual sins (plural).

The Bible says that God has written His laws in their hearts and has placed within them (within the hearts of all of us) an 'alarm system' called *conscience*.

God's conviction is tied to our conscience which in turn is connected to His laws which He has written in our hearts.

Conviction is triggered through guilt - guilt is triggered when we violate one of God's laws (commandments).

REFLECTION: Who does God convict because of their sins?

In that regard, guilt is the alarm, the 'siren', that begins to sound when we break God's righteous standard of perfect obedience to His law.

When Christians (or unbelievers) violate one of God's laws they feel guilty which is God's way of warning them they have broken one of His commandments and need to repent and get right with Him before He imposes judgment of some kind upon them.

>>> If they're believers they get right by confessing their sin and repenting (1John 1:9) - if they're an unbeliever, they get right by repenting of their sin and receiving Jesus as their Savior.

But getting back to Jesus' words with regard to the Holy Spirit's ministry to unbelievers - He said the Holy Spirit would convict unbelievers of 'sin' (singular) "...because they do not believe in Me." (v.9)

The Holy Spirit is convicting the people of this world of one sin in particular - *the sin of unbelief - the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

But how? - Through the lives of God's people.

In other words, the Holy Spirit living in and working through our lives as Christians becomes the light that exposes the darkness of unbelief in the lives of those who haven't put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

When Christians walk in the Spirit, their lives become a source of conviction (and ultimately condemnation) to unbelievers who refuse to get their lives right with God by accepting His Son into their hearts by faith. Many unbelievers respond by trying to persecute the light because it exposes their sinfulness.

John 3:18-21 (NKJV)

¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

"Christ is good and holy and pure; to reject him is to convict oneself of being opposed to goodness and holiness and purity and love."

Those unbelievers who continually refuse to receive Jesus into their heart by faith, but instead continually harden their hearts to the conviction of the Holy Spirit - will eventually commit the sin of **"blasphemy against the Holy Spirit."**—

Matthew 12:31 (NKJV)

³¹ "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

Just what is the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

It is rejecting Jesus as your Savior—in other words, it is the sin of *unbelief*.

Please understand, it is **unbelief** that condemns a person to hell - *not* the committing of individual sins. A person could **"clean up their life"** and quit his or her bad habits and still be lost and go to hell.

The only sin that will damn a person to hell for all eternity is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Most people don't understand what God has clearly said on this subject - that it isn't how good they are or how bad they are that determines whether they make it into heaven or spend eternity in hell - **their sins (plural) are not the determining factor.**

What determines whether a person makes it into heaven or is sent to hell - is whether they accept or reject Jesus as their Savior. (John 3:18–21)

Jesus died for the sins of everyone who would ever be born into this world - *"He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."* (1John 2:2)

REFLECTION: Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit the determining standard in which one would ultimately end up in hell for eternity?

When Jesus hung on that cross and said, "**It is finished**" - He was saying that the work of redemption had been completed, sin had been paid for and God had just issued a pardon to every man and woman that would ever live in this fallen world!

This **pardon is a gift from God** (definition of 'grace') - **a gift that is to be received by faith - not a reward that must be earned through works:**

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus already died for everyone's sins on Calvary's Cross—in that regard, the whole world has been *technically* pardoned.

But whether a person is **actually pardoned** depends on whether or not they **receive God's pardon** - in other words, **whether or not they accept Jesus as their Savior!**

This reminds me of a true story that comes right out of our own American history:

Back in 1830 a man named George Wilson was convicted of robbing the United States Mail and was sentenced to be hanged. President Andrew Jackson issued a pardon for Wilson, but he refused to accept it. Not knowing what to do, the matter went to the Supreme Court where Chief Justice Marshall concluded that Wilson would have to be executed. He said, "*A pardon is a slip of paper the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged.*"

This applies to God's pardon as well—a pardon that was bought and paid for with the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary's Cross!

Even as precious and priceless as that pardon is - it is worthless unless it is accepted by the one it is being offered to - reject God's pardon and it is no longer a pardon!

Maybe you've heard some unbelievers say, "*I can't believe in a God that sends people to hell!*" - and to that I say, "**God doesn't send anyone to hell - everyone that winds up in hell has chosen to be there!**" (Explain)

To reject Jesus as your Savior is to reject God's loving pardon, He is offering to you - paid for by the blood Jesus shed for you - that person has trampled the Son of God underfoot and counted the blood that He shed to save them a 'worthless thing' and has insulted the Spirit of grace. (Heb.10:29)

REFLECTION: What does it mean: "God doesn't send anyone to hell"?

Receive God’s pardon in your life today - that is what the gospel is presenting - God’s pardon to guilty and condemned sinners. A pardon that will do them no good if they don’t receive it by receiving Jesus as their Savior.

Won't you receive God's pardon today?

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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