

## The Convicting Ministry of the Spirit John 16:4-11

We started through this passage last time we were together, and we began to look at the giving of the Spirit who proceeds and comes from both the Father and the Son. We often call the third member of the Trinity the Forgotten member of the Trinity. And the reason why is Christians know so little about the Holy Spirit. We know much about the Father and we know much about the Son, but so little about the Spirit. And there are a couple of reasons for that. One is because of the concerns in the excesses of the charismatic movement. We know when the Spirit is mentioned in Scripture he is active, but the fear that overcomes so many believers is that if they learn about him they may very easily be led off into those excesses. So we are better off to discuss maybe other doctrines. But Scripture and the knowledge of Scripture do the opposite. They give light and expose error and false belief and practices. And as we learn passages like this we become more armed and have a greater confidence in the work of our Triune God. Think of it, when we study the Spirit we are learning about God.

But the other reason he is the forgotten member of the Trinity, as we look throughout the Farewell Discourse of Jesus, we learn the Spirit's great delight is not to point to himself, but point to Jesus — to magnify and glorify him. We can see that in the verse we looked at last time in 9, **“concerning sin, because they do not believe in me.”** Here the Spirit comes to convict others concerning sin, and the major sin is not the rejection of the Spirit but the rejection of the Son which would be the rejection of the Spirit, but the Spirit's joy is to put all the focus on Christ. So a Spirit filled church where the Spirit is active in the church will always be praising and cherishing Jesus Christ. That is evidence of his work.

And as we have gone through this chapter we see we are living in dark times, and the disciples were living in dark times. It is amazing the hatred against Christ is so strong that the disciples, save one, will all be martyred for their faith. And that same hatred exists today, and people are so blinded in their sin they can conclude that they are doing the work of God. And it is so easy to get downcast and even lose heart. But the whole sermon of Jesus is not to cause us to lose heart but actually be encouraged. We complain so much. We look at the darkness of the world and in our own lives. We complain about politics and society. We complain about people in our lives and our situation, and no one knows how bad I have it! We complain about how unfair life can be, loneliness or not having a moment to ourselves, money, or relationships, or even the church and what it is not doing for us.

For us, the glass is always half empty. Yes, I know God has blessed me but listen to how hard my life is! And yet God says he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heaven places. And we often do not encourage one another to count our blessings. But something else we should do as we open Scripture is we should look for how he has blessed us, how his grace is active in our lives in ways that we might not have realized. And we often do not praise God for his work in our lives, but have we thought about the Spirit's effective work in our lives in bringing conviction into our lives? Conviction is not just that we are enlightened or we gain knowledge of facts or that we agree we were wrong on this or that, but it is the ability to realize with mind,

soul, emotion the significance of being wrong to what is so obvious so much so that we are responsibility for denying that which is evident.

And here is such a great blessing — Jesus goes back to his Father because of the great advantage it will be for us as believers living in this age. Often people cry out for more. They want a sign or miracle, but Jesus gives us something or Someone better. He gives us his Spirit. And his Spirit has come into the world to convict, and convict in the deepest recesses of your soul in what is so necessary in our lives to see. Look at verse John 16:8, “**And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.**” Do you see the three convictions — sin, righteousness and judgment. And then he goes on and explains why this is so necessary in your life and mine. In the next three verses he takes one of these convictions and indicates why it is necessary. There are three “because,” or for this reason — why it is necessary.

Last time we were together we looked at the first of those and that is the Spirit has come to convict our hearts with the enormity of sin, and before any can see their need of Christ, they need to see their sin, and the greatest sin is unbelief in Jesus — a rejection that Jesus came into the world. Once you see the sin of not believing in Jesus, we start to see so much sin in our lives. And if you see your sin before a holy God, you are so blessed. If you see your sin as a believer so much so that you realize what needs to change and the unbelief that exists in your heart you are blessed. And today I want us to look at those last two convictions, and the blessings they are in our lives and we seek through the ministry of the Spirit to make much of the Son. Do you realize how blessed you are with the Spirit’s work in your life?

1. He has come to convict the world of righteousness. V. 10.

Now think of what righteousness is. It is a rightness of conduct before God and before man. It is doing the things we ought to do, saying the things we ought to say, and thinking the things, and desiring the right things that magnify our God. It is doing his will and doing it with delight and passion. And in any given situation, it is choosing the highest response that will most glorify our God.

Now think of why this ministry of the Spirit is so necessary in our world and in our lives. We live with a faux righteousness. Our world looks and sees no need of Jesus because it believes in a false righteousness. You explain the gospel and they think they have have more than enough clout with God. If you weigh the my good deeds and my demerit on a scale, my good deeds will outweigh my demerits. I can remember as a little boy in my early single digits I was given a coin. I thought I could buy anything with that coin. And I went into a store to get the biggest ice cream that I could get but my coin was useless. I looked stunned at the merchant because I gave the coin. He said it is not enough. But that is the way humanity is. They really believe their coin of righteousness is enough to pay their sin. This was the problem of the Pharisees in the gospels they thought, and defiantly held on to their coin of righteousness as being enough before God. And we know through our Saviour that the righteousness that God requires has to far exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Well, how do we see we have been duped by our own so-called righteousness? How does God the Spirit convict us of our unrighteousness or our false righteousness? Well, look at our verse again, “**concerning righteousness, because I go to the**

**Father, and you will see me no longer.”** Now think of where Jesus was going, and listen to Psalm 24:3-4, **“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.”** Who can ascend into heaven and stand in the presence of God? Only the one who has absolute clean hands and a pure heart. What is my problem and your problem? I do not have clean hands, and my heart is even a bigger problem. We do not have that kind of righteousness. Our hearts are dead, and therefore proud of our own righteousness at the same time. So how does the Holy Spirit overcome that faux righteousness? By showing us the true righteousness in Jesus Christ, by showing us what kind of righteousness is necessary and the only place that righteousness can be found. As we look at the life of Jesus we realize and you should realize — I am not like Jesus. My heart certainly is not pure. My hands are not clean. My coin of righteousness cannot pay the eternal debt I owe. I have no righteousness, no right, no currency to approach God.

Think of the significance of where he is and think of what the resurrection of Jesus proves. It should bring two certainties into our hearts. One is the resurrection reverses the verdict of the religious leaders. They condemned him of being a transgressor, a blasphemer, unrighteous, and worthy of death and judgment. But God raised Jesus! The resurrection proves this is God’s Messiah. This is the One whom God is well-pleased. But also indicates the certainty that the righteous sacrifice of Christ was accepted by the Father. If he is my sin bearer, and he cannot pay for one of sins, whether murder in the heart, or actual murder like Paul, abortion, unfaithfulness in marriage, sins that we feel the deepest shame about, then Jesus does not have clean hands and cannot come into the presence of the Father. He ascends right into the presence of God the Father. Why? He has clean hands and a pure heart. I have the certainty all my sins are forevermore pardoned.

Now you might say, praise God for these two certainties of the resurrection. Praise God I am justified by faith and there is now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. But why have you made that connection? Why are you trusting in Jesus today? Why are you singing about his finished work? Why am I no longer trusting in my righteousness but his? It is because you have been blessed — graced — by the ministry of the Spirit of God. Yes, your mind and heart has made these connections, but without the Spirit you or I would have never made these connections. I trust and love Jesus because of his work in your life. When you realize the depths in which we have been blessed by God, it is so hard to complain about anything in our lives. God has so gloriously blessed by his Spirit by seeing the need of Jesus’ righteousness, by trusting in him through faith alone. What more could the Spirit do in our lives? And here is the answer — there is so much more!!

2. We see the Spirit’s conviction on judgment. V.11.

The one thing our world does not want to talk about is judgment, and even our Christian’s, we many times feel embarrassed in talking about eternal judgment. This is one of the aspects many hate about the gospel. Before we can ever understand the good news, we have to understand the bad news about how we stand before God and what we deserve before God. So we might say something like this, just bear with all the

talk about judgment and wrath and condemnation because I am going to come to the good stuff. And individuals have no problem believing God loves them, or God has a wonderful plan for their lives. Even as we talked about last time, they have no problem accepting that God is going to judge and condemn some for all eternity when it happens to be the Hitlers, Pol Pots or other evil men of the past. The problem comes when we talk about self. This is where the objection comes in. So think of the blessing here. I am not only a sinner, and am unrighteous and cannot appear before God, but I am under the most sever and just judgment. And when we talk about being saved, we are saved from that ultimate and eternal judgment. We are saved from God by God to be brought to God. So here it is again: it is an absolute blessing to realize and recognize the just judgment of God because without that there is no fleeing to God. We are so blessed by the work of His Spirit!

So saying all of that, there is more here in the ministry of the Spirit that we need to consider if we are going to see today as believers in Christ how blessed we are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus through the ministry of the Spirit. Again, consider what Jesus says here and also why this conviction is necessary. Look at verse 11, **“concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”** Now what does that mean? Because once we hear about judgment we think about our own judgment but Jesus here talks about the coming of the Spirit and how he will convict us of this truth — **“the ruler of this world is judged.”** And there are a couple of ways we see this. Through the sacrifice of Jesus and his resurrection we realized that evil and the works of the devil were shown to be real. So often people will mock and scorn Christianity and its talk about judgment. But here is judgment — Jesus took that judgment we deserve on himself. And it indicates that there is real evil, and God has done something and will do something about evil in this world.

But also, think through the progression here, we see the Spirit comes and he convicts us of sin, we see our guilt before God. He convicts us of the need of righteousness, so in these two aspects he brings us to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. The question becomes: what is left to be done? All is accomplished through Jesus and the Spirit has effectively brought us to see these truths. Listen to Hebrews 2:14-15, **“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”** Think of it. We were held in that threat of death all of our lives and then judgment. But Christ came to deliver us from that bondage of the penalty. We longer need to fear death because of Christ. His power over us has been eliminated.

But Jesus not only destroyed the power or the penalty of the devil in the realm of judgment, but also in the reign of sin and his power over our hearts and lives. He has disarmed Satan and his horde. Again, the progression is so fantastic here. Convicts of sin, causes repentance and trust in Christ delivers us from the penalty, and then delivers us from the tyranny of Satan. Satan’s control over our hearts and lives has come to the end. It has been judged and terminated. Before we came to Christ listen to our lives in Ephesians 2:1-2, **“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of**

**the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.”**

Who were we following? The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. But now there is a new Spirit, none other than God who has come and gotten right inside of us and has created new life so that I no longer have to obey the devil and walk in sin.

Romans 6:17-18 says, **“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”** Do you see the glorious exchange taking place? It is talking about the here and now. And notice Paul is thanking God for this exchange. He is not saying I thank the Roman Christians you have come to these conclusions about Christ and given yourself over to righteous acts. No he thanks God. Why? This is his supernatural work. It is not normal to trust Jesus and to follow Jesus. It is not normal to have the liberty and desire to follow Jesus and not follow and be shackled to sin. It is none other than the ministry of the Spirit of God in our lives. And he changes us so completely because we want to follow Jesus and these desires seem so natural and normal, that many times we never ask, why do I have this desire and freedom to follow Christ that I did not have before? It is because of his ministry in our lives.

Think how counter-cultural you think about things like time, money, sex, politics, your enemies, forgiveness, marriage, social issues, church, God, Jesus, and the list could go on and on. Think of how our lives have progressively changed through the years of being a believer and how it will change. We look back and we realize that what I once was, I am not. And we realize that this work is none other than the work of God's Spirit. We are different people who love Jesus.

And let me just give a couple of applications and then we will be done. One is this truth of his work in us should humble us. We are called to put in effort, but ultimately when left to ourselves there would never be any change let alone trust in Jesus. Think how many shattered lives there would be in this congregation and other Bible believing churches, how many broken marriages and neglected children, think of the unforgiveness toward family members, and think of the cursing of God for all the problems in our life that would exist in the here and now if Christ through the Holy Spirit had not come into our lives. This is not your work. And this should therefore end all backbiting and slander and looking down on others as if we are better. Without this grace and advantage as Jesus calls it in the coming of the Spirit, none of us would have any yearning for Christ and any true significant change that honours him. It is a truth that should cause us not to be proud and haughty — look at me, but humble because look at what Jesus can do with such unpromising material such as my life.

But the second application is: if that is true, and you are encouraged by everything that Jesus says here about the work of the Spirit in this world and in your life, are you not convinced that he can do so much more? Are you convinced that I can say no to sin and yes to Jesus? Are you convinced that He can use your life as a blessing in others' lives that they might see Jesus? Listen to Philippians 2:12-13 because Paul is encouraging us to put effort into our sanctification. Listen to the reason why we can put effort into it, **“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work**

**out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”** Both the will and the work come from him.

Oh dear Christian, we do so much complaining about our lot in life. And it isn't always easy. But do you realize the great advantage Christ has bestowed upon you? Do you realize the great blessing of the ministry of the Spirit in your life? Here we are, and this is not natural but a work of his Spirit in praising Christ. Encourage your heart. I will guarantee as you see more and more of the blessings of Christ that is ours it will change your life. He truly has given us all his blessings in heavenly places.