

## “The Holy Spirit and the World”

### John 16:1-15

#### Introduction

One of the results of living in a world that has been abused by frivolous but successful lawsuits is that manufacturers have gone to the extreme and absurd to protect themselves legally. Consider some of these silly warning labels now found on real products for sale in the U.S.

- Windex – Do not spray in eyes
- Hair Coloring – Do not use as an ice cream topping.
- Portable stroller – Caution: Remove infant before folding for storage
- Sleeping pills – Warning: May cause drowsiness
- Christmas lights – Warning: For indoor or outdoor use only.
- Mattress – Warning: Do not attempt to eat.
- Matches – Caution: Contents may catch fire
- Pepper Spray – Caution: Never aim spray at your own eyes.
- Children's Superman Costume – Wearing of this garment does not enable one to fly
- Rowenta Iron – Warning: Never iron clothes on the body

In spite of these absurd examples of warnings, the idea of being forewarned of trouble is a good thing in many cases. Think about how much trouble can be dealt with or avoided because of tornado warning systems, warning lights in your car or on your computer, road signs, or even labels on bottles that

caution us about poison, flammability, or ingredients that you might be allergic to.

In our passage today, Jesus gives the disciples and us a warning about the trouble that we will face in the world. But unlike the examples we've just looked at, Jesus is not just giving us information. He is giving us help. He is giving power and victory. In this passage He tells us that the coming of the Holy Spirit to live in us will be more than enough to overcome the hatred and the persecution of the world. In fact, we will see that without the convicting work of the Spirit there would be no hope for overcoming the hatred of the world.

### [John 16:1-15]

In the latter verses of chapter 15 Jesus informed His disciples of the hatred and persecution they could expect from the world. He was not specific about the nature of that hatred, only clear about its reality. At the beginning of chapter 16 He gets specific. There are two things the world will do. If we look at these two things in terms of their broadest application we can see how even though we may face slightly different forms of treatment, the principles are the same.

1. They will isolate us and make us insignificant. For the disciples that would come in the form of excommunication. *They will make you outcasts from the synagogue.* In Israel, to be excommunicated was to become an outcast. You would essentially be rejected by every aspect of society. You would have no standing, not only in the religious community, but also socially, politically and in the marketplace.

2. They will destroy you – specifically Jesus says they will stop at nothing short of murder. This

is the extreme, but it is the ultimate outcome of hatred and anger. Jesus said if you are angry with your brother you've already murdered him in your heart. The pages of history are lined with the murder and killing of Christians. Even today as we pray for the persecuted church around the world, we hear regular reports of the destruction of those who love Christ.

So as chapter 16 opens, Jesus warns us of this possibility from the world. We are not always privy to future events, but Jesus forewarns us here because He doesn't want us to stumble when it happens. How easy is it to wonder where God is when things are most difficult? Jesus knows that if we understand that the fruit of unbelief in the world will be opposition and assault for those who love Him, we will then not be shaken in the day of trial.

But that is only the introduction to the encouragement. The hope and power Jesus gives us is the promise of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world. And so while the disciples continued to struggle with the sadness of Jesus' coming departure and the news that very difficult trials await them, Jesus goes on to show them the great help that the Holy Spirit will be as He works in the world. *And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.* There are three things the Holy Spirit will do in the world.

#### I. Convict the World Concerning Sin

When we read these words we find a glimmer of hope in our hearts. After all, when we look at the world around us we can start to list the sins that we wish the world would be convicted of. Why can't the world see the sinfulness of lust, and abortion, and greed and immorality, and homosexuality and pride . . . and on and on we can list the sins? But there is

actually a much greater need in the world than that the world begin to feel bad about a laundry list of offenses against God. The truth is the individual sins of the world flow out of one great sin – lack of faith in Jesus Christ. That’s the essence of verse 9. People could come to all kinds of right conclusions about particular issues but still reject Christ. But belief in Christ is the one thing that will lead to right convictions about specific issues. That’s why no matter how hard we might labor in our culture for one particular issue or another, we need to always do it in the context of evangelism.

This word *convict* in this passage means *to prove guilt or to show fault*. In Matthew 16:15 we are told that if a brother sins against us we are to go and *tell him or show him* his sin. This is same word. Ephesians 5:11 & 13 translates the word as *expose*. *Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.*

We often talk about the blindness of those in the world. Last week we looked at some specific passages that highlight why the world can’t see the way we do. They don’t have the Spirit of God living within them. But what we learn here is that the Holy Spirit does work to give men in the world a sense of their sin. He exposes sin.

The question is how do men respond to this convicting of sin? There are two possible responses.

The first we have illustrated in Acts 2. It’s the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has descended upon the church like a wind and a fire. Peter preaches a sermon. You can read the text of the sermon in Acts 2. It’s not a fancy or a flashy sermon. It’s filled with Old Testament allusions. As one commentator said, you could preach it in

America today, almost anywhere, and get very little response.

But on that day, in that place the Holy Spirit was at work convicting the world of sin. When Peter was done, we are told the people *were pierced to the heart*. That's the key phrase. They were pierced. They were convicted. They had an overwhelming sense of their sin. *What shall we do?* And of course, we know the outcome. They repented and believed in Christ and were saved.

Now, move forward to Acts 7. Here is another sermon preached. This time by Stephen. The Bible tells us a couple of things in the context. First that Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit. So we know that God the Spirit was there working. Secondly, we are told that the people were resisting the Holy Spirit. So what happened?

After Stephen finished, actually they interrupted him, so before he was finished, we are told that they *were cut to the quick*. In the English it sounds very similar to Acts 2 where the people were *pierced to the heart*. In both cases something was stirring deep in the heart. In both cases the full force of the people's sin was being exposed. In both cases the Holy Spirit was convicting the world of the sin of unbelief. But in Acts 7 the word means to become furious or enraged. We are told that they gnashed their teeth at Stephen – and in the end fulfilled what Jesus prophesied right here in John 16. They killed him *thinking they were offering service to God*.

I suppose we should think of application from this point on two fronts. First, from a personal standpoint it would be good for each of us to think about how we respond to being confronted by our sin. What do you do when the Holy Spirit – whether it's through the Word of God or through another

person – what do you do when He points out your sin? Do you humble yourself and confess and turn? Or do you gnash your teeth? And you need today, to make a commitment to be a person that will walk the road of humility.

Secondly, are you ready to be a witness for Christ? Are you ready to speak the gospel to others? You are called to do so. The Holy Spirit does this work of convicting, most often, through His people. But be aware, be prepared, be forewarned that some will be hardened by the message. Others however will receive the news with great humility that will lead them to faith.

## II. Convicts the World Concerning Righteousness.

Verse 10 tells us that He does this *because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me*. You see, when Christ was here the world could see righteousness. When Christ ascended, righteousness would be seen by the work of the Holy Spirit. So how does the Holy Spirit expose, or show or convict the world of righteousness?

We've already begun to see the answer. Last week we learned how the Holy Spirit works in us and in His apostles. We actually skipped ahead a little bit and peaked at verses 12-15 to learn that through the apostles the Holy Spirit would give us the Scriptures. *Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God . . . But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth . . .* So how will the world be convicted of righteousness? The answer is through the Word of God. The task of the church and the people of God is to give the light of the Word to the world. And it is the Word that speaks of Jesus Christ. Remember the end of 15:26? *The Spirit will testify about Me.*

But also the world we be convicted of righteousness as they see Christ formed in you. Back in chapter 15 we spent a lot of time talking about how we are to abide in Christ. But the Bible also teaches that Christ abides in us. *I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.* The world will learn righteousness as they observe the lives of God's people. That's a great responsibility. And one which we too often fail to fulfill. But even when we fall short, we can demonstrate the humility and repentance and sorrow that will demonstrate the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in us.

The responses will be the same as what we've already seen. Some will be drawn to us and Christ like a fragrant aroma. Others will see in something they hate. But either way, the righteousness of Christ goes forth.

III. Convicts the World Concerning Judgment  
Verse 11 tells us that this final work of the Spirit in the world is because the ruler of this world has been judged. We know the reality of what happened at the cross. It was there that the head of Satan was crushed. It was there that the defeat of the ruler of this world was secured. And from that time forward the world has been set free from the bondage of Satan. The strong man has been bound. Satan fell like lightning as the gospel was preached.

And the results of this judgment can be seen in the world in two ways. First of all, the nations are receiving the gospel. No longer is the good news confined to one nation. There is no longer any distinction between Jew and Greek. The gospel is powerful to save all men in every nation.

Secondly, where the gospel is planted and embraced, nations prosper and good is accomplished. There is a transforming work of the

Spirit of God that is readily seen by those who have eyes to see.

As we conclude this morning, I want to end by reminding you that these wonderful works of the Spirit are not done in some mystical, eerie, undefined manner. Look at verse 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.* The work of the Holy Spirit is a work that is done in and through you – not independent of you.

If you belong to Christ, then you have the Holy Spirit within you. He will keep you from stumbling. He will give you strength to overcome your trials and the opposition from the world. He will use you to bring forth fruit. This is yet another reason for you to abide in Christ. Let us rejoice in the powerful work of God the Spirit in overcoming the world.