

Subject: *The Holy Spirit's Work of Conviction*

Scripture: *John 16:1-11*

This part of John's Gospel tells us about Christ and His disciples in the Upper Room. This was His last night with them before His arrest and crucifixion. Jesus is obviously teaching some of the most important things the disciples would need to know before He leaves them.

Christ tells the disciples what will take place after His death, resurrection, and ascension back to heaven. First of all, He tells that the world will oppose and persecute believers. Second, He tells them the Holy Spirit will come and empower believers to accomplish His work in the world. He even says it will be to their advantage for Him to leave because then the Holy Spirit will come.

1. Conflict with the world (vs. 1-6)

A. The description of this conflict

"These things" in vs. 1 refers back to the Lord's warning in John 15:18-21. The world hated Christ and the world hates Christians. Christ prepared them for the conflict so they wouldn't be offended or stumble. The word "offended" carries the idea of being caught in a trap. They need to be prepared for what they will face. The main conflict with the Christian faith would come from the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus predicted that they would be put out of the synagogues and some of them would be killed. They will be considered as enemies of God, and so whoever kills them will think they are serving God.

B. The reason for this conflict

The world will persecute and kill Christians because they don't know God the Father or His Son Jesus. They know about God, but they don't know Him personally (Jn. 15:21). Jesus said: "If they persecute and hate me, they will persecute and hate you also."

C. The warning of this conflict

Jesus wants the disciples to be ready for persecution when it happens, so He tells them ahead of time. He had always protected them from attack, but He was going to leave them and told them what to expect. When He was gone they would remember this warning. When William Tyndale was persecuted and his enemies were out to kill him because he wanted to give the Scriptures to the people in the English language, he said: "I never expected anything else."

2. Comfort for the disciples (vs. 7)

"Nevertheless" Jesus told them something that would help them in the trials that would come. Verse 7 is one of the most surprising statements Jesus ever made: "It is to your advantage that I go away." Can you imagine what they thought when He said that? He explained that He must leave so the Holy Spirit would come.

In John 14-16 Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit in two ways. He is the Comforter and the Spirit of truth. The Comforter means one who is called alongside to help. He is our advocate, our encourager, our helper who does for us what Christ did for His disciples while He was here on

earth. Jesus said He was “another Comforter” (Jn. 14:16, another just like me). Spurgeon said: “What a mercy for us that one person of the Sacred Trinity should become our Comforter!”

We should notice that the Spirit is personal, not a thing or an influence. The Spirit is spoken of as he and him, not it. It is important to note that the Holy Spirit comes to the disciples and not to the world. His ministry will be to believers and through believers (vs. 7).

3. Conviction by the Spirit (vs. 8-11)

The Comforter is also the Convicter. The word “reprove” may be translated convict. It is a courtroom term that means to convince someone beyond any doubt, to confirm something as true. Here it means to convince someone of the truth so as to lead them to repent of their sin and believe in Christ as Lord and Savior. The Spirit convicts the world in three ways:

- A. **He convicts of sin** – Although we are guilty of many sins, the one sin in mind here is the sin of unbelief and rejecting Jesus as Lord and Savior. God’s moral law, the Ten Commandments, convinces us that we are guilty of sin. Our conscience convinces us that we have done wrong and are guilty of sin. But all sins can be forgiven if we repent and receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior by faith. If we reject Christ there is no forgiveness and no hope. ***John 3:18*** *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* The Holy Spirit convinces us to place our faith where God placed our sins, in the person of Jesus Christ.
- B. **He convicts of righteousness** – Jesus is the perfect standard of God’s righteousness. All other righteousness falls short. ***Romans 3:10*** *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.* The Holy Spirit convinces us to reject any method of self-righteousness and to submit to Christ and the righteousness God provides for us when we believe in Him. ***Romans 10:3-4*** ³ *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* ⁴ *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*
- C. **He convicts of judgment** – The Holy Spirit convinces us that we are caught up in a world controlled by Satan, the prince of this world, and he has been judged already and is awaiting his eternal punishment. The Spirit convinces us that we will suffer the same judgment unless we believe in Christ who will save us from hell.

Any preacher or teacher can only preach and teach the truth, but the Holy Spirit is the only One who can convince a person to repent and believe the truth. In Acts 2, when Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, he told the crowd that they had crucified God’s Son, the Lord of glory. The Holy Spirit was at work and the people were pricked in their heart and they cried out, “What shall we do?” Peter told them to repent and be baptized, and they all did exactly what he told them. They repented of their sin and obeyed the Gospel. Peter didn’t convince them to do that. The Holy Spirit did.

The Holy Spirit works to convict the world of their sin, of God's righteousness and His judgment to come. This is the same world that hates Christ and hates believers. What seems to be impossible is possible only because God is at work.

Does God's work of conviction guarantee that a person will be saved? To put it another way, is it possible to be convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment and yet not be converted?

We find the answer to that question in [Acts 24:24-27](#)

From that story we learn it is possible to be convicted and not be converted. John MacArthur makes this brief comment about Felix the governor: "The moment of conviction passed, and Felix foolishly passed up his opportunity to repent." When the Spirit of God convinces you of your sin, God's righteousness, and coming judgment, it is a serious thing to reject or ignore it.