

# Sin Righteousness and Judgment

*Gospel According to John*

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**Bible Text:** John 16:8-33  
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Alright, let's look in John chapter 16 and I want to pick up in verse 8. Now as the LORD has burdened my heart in this chapter, it really, and you may not realize this, but it answers some accusations that men bring against me and some others that endeavor to always exalt the work of the LORD Jesus Christ; and the accusation is that you emphasize so much the work of Christ for us that you don't believe in the work of the Spirit in us. Now wait a minute. That might be your argument as far as not wanting to hear of the work of Christ for us, but don't ever try to drive a wedge between the work of Christ for his people and the work of the Spirit in his people because the work of the Spirit in his people is to point them to Christ. That's as simply as I know how to put it. Most of these people today run around talking about the work of the Spirit in you and all these things, all of the emphasis is upon the Spirit. But even before we had read here in chapter 16 of John, look what Christ said would be the Spirit's work and coming in verse 26, "When the Comforter is come," and again remember last time we looked at that word comforter, it means the advocate. Whose advocate is he? Not yours. He's Christ's. He's Christ's defender. He's the defender of who Christ is and what he accomplished. You know how I know that? We're reading his testimony right now. This word was inspired by the Spirit of God for one purpose, defend Christ against all accusations, against all of men's ignorance and blindness and unbelief. "And when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father." You see, you can't drive a wedge in the Trinity. You see here mentioned the Spirit, the Son and the Father all working together. "Even the Spirit of truth, which proceeded from the Father." How do we know he's the Spirit of truth? "He shall," what, "testify of me." What does an advocate do in court? He testifies. People, what was going on here? People were denying Christ. They were denying that he was the Christ and he's saying, "There's one coming that's going to defend me whether you believe it or not. And he'll testify of me and ye shall bear witness." There he's talking to those in whom Christ is revealed, those that Christ redeemed. "Ye shall bear witness because ye have been with me from the beginning."

I left off last time here mentioning in verse 8 or drawing a contrast between verse 8 and verse 13, and I want to come back to this because here in verse 8 and there's a twofold work of the spirit in this world. This business of saying that the Spirit is going around

trying to get as many saved as he can and won't you let Christ come in, he's knocking at your door. That is not the message of scripture. God is God. He will save his people. He saved them from the penalty of sin in the death of Christ. He'll save them from their ignorance and blindness in calling them to himself by the work of the Spirit. And he will save them from the very presence of sin in the final day when he raises them again unto glory.

There's no doubt, but there is a work of the Spirit among the unbelieving. And that's what we see here in verse 8, "when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin." Now I know that this has often been preached that it's talking here about his work in the elect, but notice the word "world." You'll find in scripture there's always a distinction made between the world and the elect. "I pray not for the world," Christ said, "but those that thou hast given me." So we have to back away a little bit here and look at this carefully. I believe the Spirit's presence in the world is a reproof. That's what this word means here, reprove. In other words, it is a conviction, a bringing to light of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Now you notice here in this verse 8, this is not a reference to the Spirit's conviction in the heart of the elect because that would be unto repentance. If the Spirit so works in a heart, they will repent of sin. They will repent of their own righteousness. They will repent of any hope in themselves. That's what the Spirit does when he regenerates the heart. But the word, if you go back and just look this word "reprove" here in verse 8 up in a lexicon, a dictionary, it means to bring one in as guilty. It means to put to shame by proving them to be wrong. It's like bringing somebody into court and everybody's saying he's innocent. He'll be acquitted. And all of a sudden, some witness stands up and provides a piece of evidence necessary that convicts them. Not convicts them in the sense of bringing them to repentance, but brings them to shame, as many will be in the day of judgment. when they'll stand and say, "LORD, LORD, have we not done mighty works in your name?" And Christ will say, "I never knew you."

Do you realize the Spirit right now in the world through this word and through the very testimony of Christ that's set forth clearly revealed in the gospel, is bringing to light the shame of unbelievers, the shame of those that seek any other kind of righteousness but will not submit to the righteousness imputed of God in the death of his Son. I believe that's what's being described here. It means to convict with a view to condemnation and judgment, not repentance. The reproofing here is unto condemnation. That's why he's reproofing the world. On what basis will God send sinners to hell? The very testimony of the Spirit. Where? In this word.

Now you might think that I'm just up here flapping my jaws and talking to you about my view of the way things are. I'm not. I'm taking this word. Christ sent his Spirit into this world. He inspired this very word which now stands as his testimony to the world to reprove anyone that continues to stand against Christ and against that work that he accomplished in his death to justify sinners. Stand there all you want to, but I'm telling

you it will be to your condemnation. Now the Spirit doesn't have to do anything. The word has already been stated. The testimony has already been there. Have you ever had anybody come up to you and you're proposing to do something and they said, "Have you studied such-and-such a law? Do you realize that So-and-so went to prison on this very basis of which you're trying to push ahead right now? It's in the books." You might say, "Oh, well, I'm going to go ahead anyway. That was then. This is now." Guess what? All of a sudden, the arresting officer comes and says, "You're going to jail based on this law."

That's the same sort of thing. Why are people condemned? Based on this word. The testimony of the Spirit reproves them. It's not to convince. You see, that's where a lot of people misinterpret this. It's to bring in guilty without any confession or feeling of guilt by the guilty one. This is addressing people that God has left to themselves and yet they stand condemned. You know, if you look over in John 8, this is where Christ used this same word, the word reprove here, "when he has come he will reprove," and you notice the marginal reading says "convince," but it's not in the sense of bringing to repentance. Here in John 8 and verse 46, he says, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" What is he saying there? He's not saying "which of you is able to make me realize that I have sinned." That's not what Christ is saying but what he's saying is "which of you can substantiate this charge so as to bring conviction and judgment and condemnation on me? Which of you can furnish proof against me as one convicted of the law?" It doesn't mean that they come under conviction in themselves, but it means they stand convicted in the face of the law, like James talks about. You disobey the law on one point, you're condemned to the whole law.

So I hope that helps situate here verse 8 for us, because what we're going to read now in verses 9, 10, and 11 is just how this world stands condemned by the testimony of the Spirit. You say, "Condemned how?" On three charges. This is a court case. Three charges of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Someone says, "What are the charges against me?" Here they are. That's why a person is not going to have to stand up and hear, each individual hear the charges read against them in the day of judgment. The charges have already been read. They're here in this book whether men hear them or not, you see.

So here it is, first charge is, what? "Of sin because they believe not on me." And again, it's not here referring to the Spirit's individual work in the heart of the sinner, but rather his very presence in the world as sent by Christ as his representative, as his advocate, and yet because of their blindness of heart and unbelief, they don't perceive his true work. That's the greatest sin. We can talk all we want to about abortion and about adultery and about homosexuality, those are all sins, granted, evil, but if you want to know what it is that sends people to hell, it's the fact that they have not perceived the true work of the LORD Jesus Christ. They've remained in blindness.

And there's no pleading here of ignorance. Just because you're ignorant of the law doesn't keep you out of condemnation. These guys in Enron, I listened to some of their testimony, they're all trying to plead that they didn't know what was going on. They're all

trying to scurry around and try to prove that, "You know, that was So-and-so, it wasn't me." Guess what? Conviction comes down. Why? You're accountable. You're accountable.

If there had been faith, if there had been that faith, if this was in a sense in verse 9 here of the Spirit convicting of sin, like you hear some preacher saying, "Well, this is God convicting the sinner of his sin." Well, but look, it doesn't make sense, does it? "Of sin because they believe not on me." It's not talking about his work to bring them to faith. It's talking about his testimony of Christ and his finished work in which they continue to stand in unbelief and therefore, they're condemned. They're condemned.

You see, dear friends, unbelief is far more than just error of judgment. You can talk about people out there who have never heard, but you've heard. You've heard. What unbelief is a non-consent of mind and heart, a thinking that, "Well, it'll all work out somehow. I can still go on my way whether I ever believe or not." That in of itself, you have the testimony of the Spirit against you. That's what this is saying. Of sin because of unbelief.

But secondly, look here in verse 10, "Of righteousness." Of righteousness. What is this? What is this charge? Well, the Spirit's work in the world is not to improve it but some people get these campaigns together, "We're going to go out here and improve the world." I remember when I was in Africa one time, they had a campaign, they were going to chase the devil out of Abidjan. All the churches got together, joined hands, and they were going to rid Abidjan of the devil. People look at that, and they were fasting. They were praying. This was a huge campaign. There was preachers stomping pulpits and stomping platforms and going up and down there, chasing out Satan. Guess what? It's just as evil a place as it ever was, just like here, Shreveport, Louisiana. I don't care how many so-called Bible churches they build. The Spirit's work in this world is not to improve it. It already stands condemned in Adam. It's just awaiting its final judgment and condemnation. Our goal, the Spirit's work is not to try to make this world a better place to live. That's why I don't lead campaigns. I'm not marching across, doing a march for Jesus across Texas Street Bridge with these other guys holding hands. Somehow we're going to take Shreveport for Jesus. The Spirit's work in this world, again, is what? As Christ's advocate, it is to vindicate Christ and his work of establishing righteousness and having that righteousness imputed to his people and God being satisfied with that work and that being the righteousness of his people.

Now, that's the testimony, again, of Scripture and again, his very presence in the world is that testimony. Is the Spirit in this world? Did Christ actually send his Spirit? Scripture says he does. I don't see him. Christ said that. The Spirit blows like the wind. He blows where he wills. You see the effect of it, but you don't actually see the wind and his work in the world is to testify to Christ having finished the work of righteousness and returned to the Father. That's really what this is all about.

So if there's any doubt in your mind, again, did Christ finish the work or not? The Spirit testifies that he has, and that's enough for me. I have it right here in this word. The Spirit's presence in this world objectively, everybody talks about the subjective work of the Spirit, but the objective work of the Spirit, it not only vindicates Christ as God's righteousness, but what? Because this is to condemn the world now: it condemns any who go about to establish their own. That's why it says here, "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father and ye see me no more." What does Christ going to his Father have to do with righteousness being established? His Father would never have received him back had not that work been finished. But what do we have people doing around today? Trying to finish the work. Christ did, he did the essential part, but now we've got to finish this. And so you got them joining hands in prayer and we're going to go out and get this job done for Jesus. That in and of itself is a campaign against the very testimony of the Spirit. Had Christ been an impostor as the religious world insisted when they cast him out, do you think the Father would have received him? He's saying of righteousness. He's saying, "Of my own righteousness. That's what the Spirit will convince you of, will reprove you of. You'll stand condemned because you have stood against what I've come and accomplished." And he said, "because I go to my Father." Therefore, Christ is vindicated in his going to the Father, glorifying him, and then sending his Spirit into the world. All right?

And then the third charge here in verse 11, Of judgment," of judgment, it says, "because the prince of this world is judged." You know, the Spirit's presence in the world is evidence that Satan's sentence has already been rendered. I remember that campaign there in Abidjan, a bunch of the pastors asking me when I was there, was I going to get involved, what was our church going to do? I said, "I don't have to take my time to go around and try to chase Satan out of the capital city of Abidjan. I know something about Satan that maybe you don't know, and that is he's already been defeated. Maybe not toward the world. He continues to have an effect in the world as far as blinding men's eyes with regard to Christ, but I'll tell you this, he has no effect with regard to God's redeemed ones because Christ has bought them and it's just as sure as anything that in time the Spirit's going to come and open that cell door and bring them marching right on out and Satan's not going to stop them." Satan's not going to stop them.

Why? It says here, "because the prince of this world," what, "is judged." Not shall be. Is. Is judged. And the Spirit's presence in the world, dear friends, is evidence that Satan's sentence has already been rendered and he no longer can retain any for whom Christ died. I'm thankful it's that way. I believe Revelation 20, when we get to it, that's what it's describing, how he's been bound with regard to those that Christ has redeemed. Christ said that, "I'll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against me." Against me. Now, he can dig in his heels against us, but they'll not prevail against him, what? In that shed blood, in that righteousness that's already been established, in that justification. He'll bring up accusations to your mind and heart like he always does and make you feel like you're undeserving of God's favor. Well, we are, but that doesn't change the fact that

I'm redeemed and that I'm justified and I'm in God's eyes just as his Son, not because of anything in me, but because of that imputed righteousness to my account. That's good news, because the prince of this world is judged.

When the Spirit of God has finished his work of calling out those whom Christ has redeemed, that's when this execution, you say, "Well, isn't Satan still running around?" Yeah, the actual execution hasn't taken place yet, but the sentence has already been rendered. It's like we've got people on death row. Their sentence was rendered. It might take 25 years to pull the switch, but it's been rendered. They're not going free. They can curse, they can write letters, they can say all they want to, but it's not going to change the judgment. And that's what Christ is saying here with regard to the Spirit's presence in this world. The fact that he is here, this is a testimony that indeed he has been judged. He has been judged. Look at the tense of the word. It doesn't say shall, but because the prince of this world is judged. Is judged.

Now you say, "Well, that's fine. That's the Spirit's work in the world. What about in the heart of those that Christ has redeemed?" Well, this is dealt with here too in this portion. Christ said, "I have yet many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now." I've found in preaching this that there's a bunch of people out there that profess to know Christ that can't even bear what I've just told you. They still wrestle with it. They're still... And that's fine. That's fine. You know, the LORD has to teach us. But I do know this, that as we come back and weigh these things against the word, this is the testimony of the Spirit, he will teach us. He will teach us. And that's what Christ told his disciples.

But here in verse 13, let me just come to this, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth." Do you see that word "howbeit"? That's why I say there's a change here. I've just described to you the very testimony of the Spirit, how it will condemn the world. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you," there's a clear distinction here between the world and you, "he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." So make that distinction, if you will, in your Bibles, the specific reference to you in contrast to the world.

Now here we go. For the elect, for those that Christ has redeemed, he is the Spirit of truth. I like that. He's the Spirit of grace, but he's the Spirit of truth in opposition to the spirit of, what? Error. That lying spirit that controls the blind and continues to lead them in error. For those that Christ has redeemed, he is the Spirit of truth. If you look over in 1 John 4 and that's what blesses me, you know, some of you have been sitting listening to this message for some time, and what blesses my heart is to hear you saying, "You know, I didn't see it as clearly as you were setting it forth in the beginning, but I see it now." What's that? Well, that's the Spirit of truth removing the blindness from the heart, removing the blindness from the eyes, and giving you an earnest desire even to hear the truth. I thank God for it. I'm always surprised when someone comes the first time to hear

me set this forth, but I'm really surprised when they come back a second time. And for some of you that continue to come back, to me there's some hope that indeed the LORD is directing your heart and mind to Christ. I pray so. I can't think of a greater place of condemnation than to be sitting where you're sitting and to hear this truth week in and week out and still be left to yourself in blindness. to your sin, to continue to pursue another way of righteousness. That's a fearful, fearful thing.

But here in 1 John 4, in verse 6, you see John said, "We are of God." Here's the we, here's the you, in contrast to the world. "He that knoweth God," what, "heareth us." Now it's not just talking about hearing the physical voice, but here's the message. Here's the voice of Christ. That's an amazing thing to me. I stand up here talking to you about Christ and his finished work, but when the Spirit does a work in your heart, you don't hear my voice. In fact, you don't even hear an audible voice. What you hear is the word, you hear the testimony of the Spirit of truth, which the LORD uses to bring conviction to the heart. You say, "Why so?" Well, he that is of God, he that knoweth God is known of God, really is what that is. Heareth us.

"He that is not of God heareth not us." So there's the contrast. For you, the same word, should God leave you to yourself, will stand as a testimony against you of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. But if God gives you his Spirit, you'll know the truth with regard to sin. You'll confess your unbelief. You'll confess that you have no righteousness but his, imputed there in his death. You'll confess that were it not for his grace, Satan would continue to blind you. But in your behalf, he's been judged. He's already been judged. He can't keep you.

And that's why John says, "Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and," what, "the spirit of error." So that when it says the spirit of truth, it's in contrast to the spirit of error, that blindness which so many are still under. and which for a while we were under until God was pleased to teach us. But Christ the truth, dear friends, is revealed by the spirit of truth. How? Through the word of truth. I'm not talking to you about some, you know, seance here where we get together and we're all gonna hold hands and swoon and sing Jesus is LORD until somebody falls out and then, "Amen brother! So-and-so's got the Spirit at this meeting." That's that's not it. It's the word of truth, the word of truth, the word of truth, the word of truth, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little there a little, but it's the truth. That's how that persuasion comes to the heart, how it comes to the heart.

You know before Christ is revealed by the Spirit a sinner can't see. He doesn't see his own unbelief. He'll claim to his dying breath, "No I'm not trusting in my own righteousness." But he is. And when the Spirit of God teaches them of the righteousness of Christ, boy, he cries out like Isaiah, "Woe is me, I'm undone!" That's, I believe, what the Spirit does. But before a sinner can see, do you know what he needs? He needs both sight and light. Write those two words down, sight and light. Eyes can't see in the darkness. You can have the best eyes in the world, but do like they did with us when we visited Mammoth Cave up

there in Kentucky, go on down, it's dark, deep, and then have them shut the lights out on you. Boy, you feel like your eyes are popping out of your head. You're determined, "I'm want to see something down here." You can't. You can have all the best eyes in the world, but without the light, they can't see. Sight and light. You know, eyes can't see in the darkness, and light shows nothing to the blind. If you're blind, turn up the light as much as you want. They're not going to see it. They're not going to see it.

So with regard to the truth, there has to be that seeing eye and that illuminating light and that's what the Spirit of truth does. You know, if we have an interpreter, I don't know if you've ever traveled in foreign countries, but one of the most frustrating things about being in another country is not being able to understand the language. And what's the first thing you look for? A faithful interpreter. Somebody you can trust. Well, for an interpreter, we need a trustworthy guide, an infallible teacher. And dear friends, that's what Christ is saying here in verse 13, "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." I don't want to trust my senses. I don't want to trust my experience. I don't want to trust the word of another. I need the Spirit of God to teach me as to who Christ is.

And boy, I pray he does. I pray he does. I know how many times I've deceived myself. We do it. You look out there one day and you say, "How long has that pillar been there with that blue sign on it?" And someone says to you, "That's been there. You haven't seen that going by?" No, I haven't. No, I haven't. Well, it's been there all the time. That's the same thing with this word. It's not something new that takes place when the Spirit of Christ opens your eyes with regard to Christ and his righteousness. It's been there in the testimony of the Spirit all the time. The only problem was you didn't see it and now he's causing you to see it. And in that you rejoice.

You know, this Spirit, he's not to be found in the church. You know, people like to base truth on their denomination. He's not to be found in tradition. He's not to be found in intuition or reason, but in the Spirit of God whose work it is to quicken and illumine and interpret to the heart the written word of God. I believe that's what the LORD implants in this heart. You say, "What takes place at regeneration?" This word. It's the word of God. It's the word of Christ that the Spirit uses to teach his own. It's his word.

Now for the elect, it's the Spirit's work to guide each one. You notice that the word there that's used in verse 13, he will guide you into all truth. We'd be in a terrible mess if your learning of Christ depended upon me teaching you. I don't have enough time in a day. I can't be with you 24 hours a day, but you have this word and the Spirit's work is to open eyes.

You know, who needs guidance? Let me just close with this, and maybe you can identify this. Who needs guidance? Well, those who have trouble seeing. Do you confess that you have trouble seeing? A lot of people don't like to admit it. I see some boasting, you know, that they've got the same eyes they had when they were 20, and yet you see them



stumbling. They refuse to wear glasses. They're going to stumble over stuff and trip around but, "I've got good eyes. Got to be something else." No, those who have trouble seeing. You know, by nature we're all spiritually blind and even with the light of the Spirit, we continue to have many blind spots, don't we, because of the depravity of our heart. The Spirit's in me, but boy, I sure need him to continue to guide, to teach.

Secondly, who needs guidance? Well, those that are too weak to walk alone. I admit I am. As babes in Christ, we need him to help us. We need him to carry us. We need him to carry us. And I hope that with that care, every time we open this word, that's your dependence, not on yourself, not on what you've known. You know, there's nothing worse than to say, "Oh, I've read this portion before I know what it's saying." We've got to come afresh and anew each time. But that's the Spirit's work to do, to guide you into all truth.

But thirdly, who needs guidance? Well, as I mentioned, those who journey in an unknown country. If you've ever landed somewhere out of the, you know, you've left good old United States and all of a sudden when those doors open, you're in a foreign country, speaking a foreign language, different culture, different dress, everybody's scurrying about, you want guidance. You know, this world is a wilderness, isn't it? It's perilous. It's perilous. But it's the Spirit that keeps us in the narrow way. And it is narrow because it's all narrowed down to one person and one work, the LORD Jesus Christ. That's where it is. He's all my righteousness. He's my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification, and my redemption. That's pretty narrow. That's pretty narrow.

But he will guide you into all truth. That word guide, it doesn't mean that it's a guide like at a museum. The actual word is a compound word which means a sovereign leader directing the way, giving the orders, and causing you to move in that way. That's a good description of the Spirit's work. But the tense of the word suggests, what? A gradual, progressive, guide, advancing, or growth in the truth, contrary to some who boast of never needing correction. Boy, I hope I'm never in that camp. If you look in 2 Peter 3 in verse 18, this is my prayer for you, I trust it's your prayer for me, what's described right here, because I believe this is, as the Spirit teaches us, as he opens this word to us, if it's the Spirit of God, we're going to see more of Christ and we're going to think less of ourselves. In 2 Peter 3, in verse 18, you see how Peter put it, "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ." That's what true growth in grace is. It's growing in the knowledge of the LORD Jesus Christ. The LORD and Savior. If he's LORD, he's LORD of all. If he's Savior, he is the Savior. And to grow in grace is to grow in our need of that grace. To him be glory, both now and forever. Amen.