

“The Work of the Holy Spirit” John 16:4-15 Steve Harden 3/21/21

Alright! Let’s go to John 16 as we continue our trek through John. Shane had a study week this week and I look forward to the benefits of that as I know that you do too. John 16, and we’ll be reading beginning in verse 4.

“⁴ But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I am going 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 go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

This is the word of God.

You know, goodbyes are always hard. I don’t like them very much. I think the hardest goodbyes I’ve ever had were when I sent my kids to far off places in the world, to Turkey and to Okinawa and to Houston, not knowing when I was going to see them again! I don’t like it. It was a hard goodbye when I told my mom and my dad “See you later,” when they passed from this world. I think the most thought provoking story I have of a goodbye though, is that of Adoniram Judson. Adoniram lived in the early 1800s and was one of the first American missionaries to go to a foreign field. He went to Burma and served His Lord there for about forty years. But the goodbye in his life was when he went to his first wife’s daddy and asked him for permission to marry his daughter, Nancy. And when Adoniram went to Nancy’s daddy, he said, “I would like your blessing to marry your daughter, Nancy. But I need to tell you that I’m going to Burma to spend my life there and so, if you say yes, once we get on that boat, it will probably be the last time you ever see her.” I’ve thought many a time, what would I have told that young man? Nancy’s daddy said ‘Yes.’ They were married and two weeks later they set sail and it was the last time her daddy ever saw her, because she died early on in Adoniram’s ministry. That is a tough goodbye.

In these final chapters of John’s gospel, we see Jesus saying goodbye to His disciples. He had frequently told His disciples that He was going to leave, but it really hit home now. They understood and they were devastated. He told them to take heart though, because actually they were going to be better off when He left! Now how to explain that and understand that when you’ve been walking with Jesus for about three years and you’d seen everything that He had done? But He said they were going to be better off, because He was going to send someone else. That someone else, we know, is the Holy Spirit, but they didn’t know. He says, when the Holy Spirit comes, He is going to do two primary things in this world. He said, the Holy Spirit will

convict and guide, and that is what the Holy Spirit does to this day, primarily. He does many things. But He convicts and He guides.

So, first, the Holy Spirit convicts regarding sin, righteousness and judgement, in verse 8 it says, “⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” Jesus said, He will convict. Now this word convict means refute, to argue, to repudiate. The Holy Spirit’s role is to convince men of their error! The Bible declares that we, those without Christ, have errant views on just about everything. We have wrong-headed thinking, especially about sin, righteousness and judgement. It’s the Holy Spirit’s role to come to our minds and show us and reveal the truth of how we are in error in the way we think. You see, it all started back at the very beginning with Adam, and when Adam sinned in the garden, we call it the Fall, we know that His nature fell. He had a fallen nature, right? But sometimes we don’t think about the fact that it was not only his nature, but it was also his mind, and how he thought! He didn’t see things clearly anymore.

You see, Adam and Eve were put into the garden of Eden to glorify God, to reflect back God’s glory and beauty, to fellowship with Him and appreciate Him, if you will, to be an accurate mirror to reflect back to God His glory. But when he fell, that mirror kind of twisted a little bit and it became skewed. That image, I think about it like at Silver Dollar City, when you go into the house where the mirrors make you short or tall, you’ve seen those! It’s still the image, but that image that was once very crystal clear, now is skewed. We still reflect the image, but it’s not clear anymore. You see, we like to think, believer and unbeliever alike, that we are rational, reasonable beings, but it’s just not true because we work with a fallen nature and a fallen mind. The Holy Spirit’s role then is to come refute the errors in our mind and help us to think clearly and rightly. To do that, He has to confront us and refute the error. He convicts men of sin.

Before the Holy Spirit corrects our thinking about sin, we tend to think about our sin in kind of a truncated, erroneous way. Without the Holy Spirit’s work in our life, we tend to think of sin as kind of the exception to the rule and we categorize them as individual and we don’t ever tend to link them together. We tend to think that we’re really pretty good ol’ Joes, pretty good boys, pretty good girls, but sometimes we make errors, sometimes we sin, sometimes we fudge, sometimes we do those things. That’s kind of how we think. We think of it kind of in a truncated manner. We think that we’re basically good and we occasionally do bad things. These sinful actions are not really who we are, they’re just slip-ups, they’re something unrelated to our native goodness. We disconnect our sinful actions from our nature.

Now, I don’t run across this term or phrase near as often in Tulsa as I did in rural Oklahoma where I’ve spent most of my life, but have y’all ever heard the term “a good ol’ boy”? Some of you have, right? You kind of know what that is, right? You can say, ol’ Joe, not this Joe, right, sorry. I need to not pick a name. This man is a good ol’ boy. I know he’s done a couple stints in the pen; I know he’s mean to his wife and the kids, and yeah he can’t keep a job and he cheats from his boss, and yada yada yada, but you know, he’s a good ol’ boy; he’s basically good! Like it’s unrelated to what he does, right? That’s what a good ol’ boy is.

We tend to think of ourselves as good ol’ boys. We tend to see sin as individual acts of behavior that are somehow apart from and unrelated to who we are by nature. We refuse to see, to borrow another statement, that we’re bad to the bone! It goes deeper than the sinful things we do. It’s our very nature. Not as bad as we can be, but in everything we do, sin permeates what we do and who we are. Now, when the Holy Spirit begins to do His work on us, we begin to pick up on the fact that sin is not the bad things I do, sin has a much more sinister side. It’s who I am! It goes deep within me and I’m seriously flawed! I am created in the image of God by right of

Adam, but I, with Adam, fell and I have a skewed image, a very poor reflection of God. You see, the Holy Spirit works and reveals to me that my sinful behavior or actions are not really exceptions to the rule, they are my very nature.

I think the best example that hits me to the bone, if you will, is when someone asked Jesus, what are the two greatest commandments, and He says, the two greatest commandments are that you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. And I can't read that, I can't think about that, without realizing that I have never, for one moment, loved the Lord my God with *all* of my heart. Are not all my thoughts tainted? Can I ever say that I totally and completely love Him? Can I ever say that I really love my neighbor just as I love myself? I'll be honest with you that tonight, I'll probably be more concerned about having dinner than I'll be concerned about you having dinner. I'll be honest. I don't think about it because I'm so me-centered. So even the two greatest commandments, I never for one moment obey. You see, the Holy Spirit's role is to hold a mirror to my soul, when I read His word and He shows me that I don't.

The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin but He also convicts men of righteousness! As fallen men, we don't have an inborn understanding of the depth of our sin, but we really don't have an understanding of the heights of God's righteousness and holiness either. Our tendency in regard to righteousness is we really don't think about God at all. By nature, when I think about righteousness, I think I'm okay if I compare myself to you. I can always find somebody less righteous than me if I really look. If I just think about it that way, I look at everybody else and I think, I'm in the ballpark! I may not be as righteous as you, but you know, maybe! Right? That's how we tend to think! That or I do the scale method. You know, I try to weigh the good things I do and the bad things I do, and I always think about the good things and I don't really think about the bad things because really, they're not according to my nature, they're just individual acts. Do you see? And so, I can easily convince myself that the good outweighs the bad! This is the heart without Jesus. This is the heart before the Holy Spirit comes and starts to refute my thinking and convict me of my thinking that, 'Hey, maybe something's not right here, Steve!' He brings reason to me and says, it's not at all how I stack up against you, or you stack against me! It's not nearly anything about the scales of justice, it's how I stack up against a holy and righteous God! That's not as pretty of a picture!

Isaiah says, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." That is the emphasis that means that His righteousness is without end. His purity is so pure that there is no contaminant at all! He is pure light without any darkness at all. His goodness and righteousness and holiness are without end! There was a seventeenth century puritan called by the name of Stephen Charnock and he wrote about the evil nature of a skewed or minimalistic view of the righteousness of God. He said, "It is less injury to Him to deny His being than to deny the purity of it. The one makes Him no God, the other a deformed, unlovely and a detestable God." Do you hear what he said? I know it's seventeenth century. What he said is it's less of a slam against God to say He doesn't exist, it's less of a slam to say He doesn't exist, than to say He exists, and He isn't holy in the infinite! Because you deny His God-ness! When the Holy Spirit comes and begins to refute my thinking about righteousness and justice and holiness, I see God as He is, and I am but dust because there is a very short fuse on my righteousness.

So, the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, of righteousness, but finally, judgement, because you see, when we begin seeing sin rightly, and then we begin seeing our own sin rightly, and we see God's righteousness correctly, the only natural thing is to see that we will be judged! We see the utter hopelessness of trying to depend upon our own righteousness for right standing with

God. If it's up to me, I am toast! I can't be righteous! God, because He is righteous, because He is true to His nature, He must punish sin. He must. For you see, as the good and sovereign ruler of the universe, if He does not punish sin wherever He finds it, there is a limit to His goodness, there is a limit to His righteousness, there's a limit to His justice and He is no longer righteous and good! Do you see? God, to remain holy, holy, holy, must punish sin where He finds it. With our fallen minds, we think at times that God loves me, I know He loves, and so, He can't punish sin! Because He loves! Do not ever think that God's righteousness will ever take a back seat to His love! God is love. But He is also righteous! Every sin that has ever been committed on this planet will be judged and punished accordingly. Every single one! Or God is not righteous and just! There is coming a day when His great love and mercy will be on display and it's called judgement day. And all men will stand before God and will be judged according to what they've done. Every single sin will be punished. First, Satan will be judged, and then men. Listen to Revelation 20:

“¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

My friend, this is frightening! We stand before a holy and awesome God! And the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, and righteousness, and judgement. But praise God, the story doesn't end there! Because the Holy Spirit guides us to the truth about Jesus! If the story ended with convicting of sin, justice and righteousness, I'm going home! There's no good news in the message. But praise God, there is good news! After convicting us, and straightening out our thinking about these things, the Holy Spirit guides us into the truth about Jesus, Himself. The Holy Spirit's role in the Trinity is to shine the spotlight on Jesus! He's known as the invisible member of the Trinity because He never says, “Look at me! Look at me! Look at me!” No! He says, “Look at Him! Look at Him! Look at Him!” That's the role of the Holy Spirit. He points us to Jesus. His role is to convict you and to guide you into seeing the beauty of your Savior. Sin and judgement are never more damning than when one rejects Jesus, the most beautiful creature who has ever lived. The ultimate lovely one: perfectly good, perfectly moral, pure loving compassion, the essence of all that is good and right and clean. A rejection of Christ is the essence of evil. It's the most repulsive sin that can ever be committed. It's a rejection of God's mercy, a rejection of God's judgement. It is despising God's unspeakable gift, and the essence of sin.

But praise God that the Holy Spirit, for at least most of us in this room, has shone into our lives and our hearts and our minds and convicted us and showed us the beauty of our Savior! He has shown His great love for you! The Holy Spirit has declared to us that Jesus, this third person of the Trinity, came to earth as fully God and fully man, that He lived a perfectly righteous life and then He freely laid down His life on the cross for us, to bear the punishment for the sin that I should have paid! He took my sin away and paid that penalty for me, because I have placed my faith and trust in Him, and so have most of you. So, you no longer bear the weight of your sin. He paid that penalty. My sins, past, present and future were all paid for back

there on that cross that day some 2,000 years ago. They were laid on His back as if He were the one that sinned. And then, in the same way, His righteousness was imputed to me, given to me, and so, it was as if I had never sinned, but not only that, but that I had always lived the righteous life that Jesus lived. What a gift! Do you see that the role of the Holy Spirit is to convict and to guide to the truth about Jesus? Praise God that He's done that for most of us. Praise Him for that! You don't bear your sin anymore! If you have placed your faith and trust in Him, you don't bear it anymore! It was all laid on Jesus' back.

But think about the twelve disciples. They were hearing this, right? Think about the task that was laid to them, and I hope this will encourage you, because it's the same task that we bear. Jesus tells them that they were to go into the world and proclaim the gospel. They had no education, no rank, no standing in society, and yet, He promised that there would be one who would go with them who would actually convict and guide the people into understanding the message that they taught. And we see in the annals of history, that the gospel exploded on the world because these simple, uneducated, unassuming men told the story of God's righteousness, our sinfulness, and they shone the light on the beauty of Jesus. You see, we have the same message! We have the same commission. We have the same promise that those early day disciples had. The message we preach seems like utter foolishness, right? I mean, that there really is a heaven and a hell, and they are realities, and that somehow, whether you experience heaven or hell is tied into someone's death that lived 2,000 years ago? Do you hear the foolishness of that message? And yet, that's the message we speak, and we speak boldly to kings and to paupers, and we can go forth boldly because it's not up to us to convict and to guide, because that's the Holy Spirit's role. It's not all about us. It's all about Him. And we can trust that whenever we give this story, whenever we tell this story, that the Holy Spirit will be at work convicting and guiding. Oh my friend, just see the beauty of Jesus and tell somebody about it, that's it. Pray and trust the Holy Spirit to use your words and your life to extend the kingdom of God. Let's pray.