

# THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## John 16:5-15

Several years ago a teacher assigned to visit children in a large city hospital received a routine call requesting that she visit a particular child. She took the boy's name and room number and was told by the teacher on the other end of the line, *"We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now. I'd be grateful if you could help him with his homework so he doesn't fall behind the others."* It wasn't until the visiting teacher got outside the boy's room that she realized it was located in the hospital's burn unit. No one had prepared her to find a young boy horribly burned and in great pain. She felt that she couldn't just turn and walk out, so she awkwardly stammered, *"I'm the hospital teacher, and your teacher sent me to help you with nouns and adverbs."* The next morning a nurse on the burn unit asked her, *"What did you do to that boy?"* Before she could finish a profusion of apologies, the nurse interrupted her: *"You don't understand. We've been very worried about him, but ever since you were here yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment.... It's as though he's decided to live."* The boy later explained that he had completely given up hope until he saw that teacher. It all changed when he came to a simple realization. With joyful tears he expressed it this way: *"They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?"<sup>1</sup>*

Hope makes all the difference in our lives, does it not? If you have ever suffered from depression you know what it is like to be without hope like the boy in our story. When the disciples realized Jesus was going to go away and leave them on their own, they slipped into a state of depression and hopelessness. But then Jesus gave them a promise that would empower them with hope and would allow them to do great things in the name of Jesus. This marvelous promise begins in verse 5 of John chapter 16.

### John 16:5-15 NAS:

<sup>5</sup> *"But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'*

<sup>6</sup> *"But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.*

<sup>7</sup> *"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.*

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<sup>1</sup> James Hewett, ed., *Illustrations Unlimited*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, under: "Hope."

<sup>8</sup> *"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning **sin** and **righteousness** and **judgment**;*  
<sup>9</sup> *concerning **sin**, because they do not believe in Me;*  
<sup>10</sup> *and concerning **righteousness**, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;*  
<sup>11</sup> *and concerning **judgment**, because the ruler of this world has been judged.*  
<sup>12</sup> *"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.*  
<sup>13</sup> *"But when He, the **Spirit of truth**, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears (from God)<sup>2</sup>, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.*  
<sup>14</sup> *"He will glorify Me (Jesus),<sup>3</sup> for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.*  
<sup>15</sup> *"All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.*

Now that we have an overview of this passage let us take a closer look.

John 16:5-6 NAS:

<sup>5</sup> *"But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'*  
<sup>6</sup> *"But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.*

Jesus had previously told His disciples that He would be going away. If we look back to chapters thirteen and fourteen Jesus had said to them:

John 13:33 NAS:

<sup>33</sup> *"Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'*

John 13:36-37 NAS:

<sup>36</sup> *Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later."  
<sup>37</sup> *Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."**

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<sup>2</sup> Parentheses mine.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

John 14:1-5 ESV:

<sup>1</sup> "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.  
<sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?  
<sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.**  
<sup>4</sup> And you know the way to where I am going."  
<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

John 14:25-29 ESV:

<sup>25</sup> "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.  
<sup>26</sup> But the **Helper**, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.  
<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.  
<sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.  
<sup>29</sup> And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.

Although it is rather hard to believe, no one had ever asked Jesus where it was that He was going. Peter had asked Him where He was going (John 13:36) but Peter's question centered more around what would happen to himself rather than Jesus. So as a group their only reaction to this news was to become depressed. They were focusing on their own personal loss because they had grown very dependent on their Master. They probably wondered what they could possibly do without Him and what would become of them. If they had known where He was going and why He was going there, they would not have been so concerned about their own welfare. It would therefore seem that the logical thing to do would have been to ask Him, but so far as we know no one did.

We will see just a little later in this chapter that Jesus will tell them: "Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you." So they have His promise that their sadness will turn to joy. At this time they were unaware of the significance of the events that were about to take place that would not only change their lives but the lives of everyone from that time forward. It was therefore necessary for Jesus to explain why it was important for them that He return to the Father.

John 16:7-11 NAS:

<sup>7</sup> *"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.*

<sup>8</sup> *"And **He**, when He comes, **will convict** the world concerning **sin** and **righteousness** and **judgment**;*

<sup>9</sup> *concerning **sin**, because they do not believe in Me;*

<sup>10</sup> *and concerning **righteousness**, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;*

<sup>11</sup> *and concerning **judgment**, because the ruler of this world has been judged.*

The primary reason for Jesus to go away was so that the Holy Spirit could come and release God's power to the Church for the purpose of carrying the Gospel message of Christ to the world. The Holy Spirit works in the Church through the believers in whom He lives. Also by Jesus returning to His Father He would be able to serve believers before the throne of God.

When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, He provided the power for Peter to preach. The preaching of the Word brought salvation to many of those who heard it.

Jesus' leaving was essential in order for there to be a Gospel message to preach. Without Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension there could be no Gospel, no salvation, no forgiveness of sins, and no hope for everlasting life. The Greek for *Helper* or *Counselor*, which refers to the Holy Spirit, is *parakletos*, which was a word that described what we would consider the function of a lawyer in our courts today. They presented one's case before the court in a legal proceeding. It would be the Holy Spirit's function to present the case of Jesus' Gospel message to the world. As part of that process He would show the world the reality of their sin and its consequent judgment if they were to refuse Christ's atoning death for that sin. The Holy Spirit works within the heart and mind of an unbeliever to accept God's truth and He often uses other believers in the process, as we see in John 15:26-27 NAS:

<sup>26</sup> *"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,*

<sup>27</sup> *and **you will testify also**, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

The word "*convict*" in verse 8 means "*to convince, to convict by proof.*"<sup>4</sup> In the courtroom of life, believers are the witnesses, the Holy Spirit is the "*prosecuting attorney*," and the unbelievers are those who are standing trial and about to be found guilty. The purpose however of this trial is not to condemn them to die but rather to give

<sup>4</sup> Robertson, A.T.: Word Pictures in the New Testament. Oak Harbor: S. Jn 16:8.

them the opportunity to be free of sin and thereby be found not guilty and live.

The worst sin of all is the sin of **unbelief** and it is the job of the Holy Spirit to convince unbelievers, through the use of human witnesses, that they are sinful and therefore have need for a Savior. That Savior is provided in the person of Jesus Christ by a forgiving judge (God).

The Holy Spirit also reveals the righteousness of Christ through God's Word in the Bible. In this way Christ is glorified and He is further glorified by the way unbelievers see Him in the lives of believing Christians. Nothing speaks louder to unbelievers than the righteous actions of Christ followers.

The job of the Holy Spirit will be to *convict*. The act of convicting will relate to all three subjects touched upon in John 16, verses 8-11. The Spirit will convict the world of its **sin**, **righteousness** and **judgment**. The Holy Spirit will show the people of the world that they are sinners because of their unbelief in Christ (verse 9). The Spirit will also make the people see and understand the unique blend of **righteousness** of Jesus Christ through the behavior of believers (verse 10). The third area in which the Holy Spirit will convict people is regarding their ultimate **judgment** (verse 11). Again, the world's judgment is wrong because it is based on the principles taught by *the prince of this world*. Since he has already been judged at the cross of Christ, this reveals that the world's method of judging things is seriously flawed. The world therefore is equally condemned with Satan. The death and resurrection of Jesus struck a fatal blow to Satan's power of sin and spiritual death over the world because Christ's sacrificial death brought forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Heaven for those who would only believe that was the purpose for Him to be crucified.

Having crucified Jesus, the Jewish people convinced themselves that He was an evil person without any righteousness in Him. After all, did not their own Scripture say that only an evil person could be hanged on a tree and thus be under God's curse (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13)? However, when Jesus rose from the dead after His crucifixion that belief was shattered because the Resurrection and the Ascension proved that Jesus was God's righteous Servant (Acts 3:14-15; Isaiah 53:11). The Spirit convicts people when they refuse to accept the truth about Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). They may refuse to admit that they are uncomfortable about such a decision, but that lingering discomfort will remain with them in one form or another for the rest of their lives or until they change their mind and accept Christ. That feeling of discomfort is the Holy Spirit at work convicting them of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Hebrews 2:14-15 NLT:

<sup>14</sup> *Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.*

<sup>15</sup> *Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves*

*to the fear of dying.*

**Colossians 2:13-15 NLT:**

<sup>13</sup> *You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins.*

<sup>14</sup> *He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.*

<sup>15</sup> *In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.*

The Law of God demanded and does demand death for sin. "The person who sins is the one who will die" (Ezekiel 18:4 NLT). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23 NLT). Because all people are sinners they must face the reality of death, and that reality most often results in fear. So because unbelievers are in a state of fear they keep themselves under the control of Satan.

The only way to break free of that fear, have your sin wiped away, and be assured of eternal life in Heaven is to accept Jesus' payment for your sin on the cross. You are then set free from the penalty of permanent spiritual death that comes with sin. A person who dies in their sin will spend eternity in the torment of Hell. One who has their sin forgiven through faith in the work of Christ is set free from spiritual death and will bask in the joy of Heaven forever.

**Acts 17:30-31 NAS:**

<sup>30</sup> *"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,*

<sup>31</sup> *because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, **having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.**"*

It is the function of the Holy Spirit to make people aware of these realities so that they know they will be judged and held accountable for their decisions. People who reject the Gospel of Christ should realize that Satan was judged and sentenced by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The only thing that remains to be done is for the sentence to be carried out.

Just as Satan was judged and sentenced at the cross so too will be those who follow his lead in rejecting the salvation offered by Jesus. The Holy Spirit convicts us of coming judgment if we choose to turn away from the all-powerful God. Yet in spite of the conviction provided, many people choose their own sin and Hell over salvation and Heaven. How tragic!

John 16:12-15 NAS:

<sup>12</sup> "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

<sup>13</sup> "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

<sup>14</sup> "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.

<sup>15</sup> "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

In these verses Christ tells us of additional things the Holy Spirit does, exciting and wonderful things! First the Holy Spirit would teach them even more things about Jesus. The Spirit, Jesus said, would not determine on His own what to teach the disciples but would teach only what He was told to teach by the Father. This gives us evidence once again of the wonder of the Trinity.

The Father would tell the Spirit what to teach the apostles about the Son.

Jesus also told them that the Holy Spirit would teach them the meaning of what was about to happen regarding Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. The Holy Spirit would give meaning to the Cross as well as to future events when Jesus would return. This has been a basic responsibility of the Spirit as He inspired both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

"Our Lord was always careful to give His disciples the right amount of truth at the best time. This is always the mark of a great teacher. The Holy Spirit is our Teacher today, and He follows that same principle: He teaches us the truths we need to know, when we need them, and when we are ready to receive them. The Spirit would remind them of what Jesus had taught them. Where the Holy Spirit is at work, there must be truth. You have the entire Godhead mentioned in John 16:13, because the Spirit of God does not ignore either the Father or the Son. They work harmoniously together. As we witness in this hostile world, the Spirit uses the Word He has taught us to share Jesus Christ with the lost. It is our job to witness; it is the Spirit's job to convict."<sup>5</sup>

Because Jesus reveals the Father, as Paul tells us in Colossians 1:15, all that belongs to the Father is also the Son's. "**Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation**" (NLT). The Holy Spirit of Truth brought glory to Jesus as He taught the apostles the truth about the things that Jesus had done and said. That is what is meant in verse 15 where Jesus says "He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you." The Spirit worked in the apostles' minds so that they could understand and teach the truth about Jesus; so they could know and teach the truth about sin; so they could know and teach the truth about righteousness; and so they could know and teach the truth about judgment. Remember there is no salvation without the work of

<sup>5</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 15:18.

the Holy Spirit. No human being no matter how smart or capable has ever brought anyone to salvation without the work of the Holy Spirit.

While verses 12-15 emphasize the teaching role of the Holy Spirit, verse 14 also tells us that the Holy Spirit will also glorify Christ. In Philippians 2:9-11, NAS, we read:

Philippians 2:9-11 NAS:

<sup>9</sup> *For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,*  
<sup>10</sup> *so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*  
<sup>11</sup> *and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, glorifies the Son, Jesus Christ. Every human being will one day bow down and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. The question is, will you do it willingly, having made Jesus Lord of your life today on earth? Or will you be forced to do it as you receive the judgment and sentence of hell?

It is our hope and prayer that everyone who hears this message will receive Christ as Savior and put Him in charge of their life right now. That way you are glorifying the name of Jesus and bowing before Him.

When we have confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit then comes to live within us and give us His power. Let us then, through the power of the Holy Spirit, live lives that daily glorify Jesus.