

John 16:4b-15 – “The Work of the Spirit”

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Intro: In Eden, because of Adam’s sin, mankind lost the privilege of having personal fellowship with our Creator. But Jesus came to undo sin’s damage. Tonight, we’ll learn that because of Christ’s victory on the cross, the first step in a restored relationship with our Creator has been granted. In the Church, believers now know once again the personal presence of God through the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of all who put their faith in Jesus.

Proposition: God’s presence has returned to His people through the Holy Spirit’s indwelling ministry in the Church.

Our study tonight will concentrate around three aspects of the Holy Spirit’s work through the Church: (vv.4b-7) The Work of the Spirit in the Church: Presence; (vv.8-11) The Work of the Spirit Through the Church: Conviction; (vv.12-15) The Work of the Spirit for the Church: Guidance and Glory.

(vv.4b-7) The Work of the Spirit in the Church: Presence – Jesus, the Master Teacher, knew that His disciples were not able to understand at present all that He wished to share with them. Yet He also knew that His time to return to the Father was rapidly approaching. Having told His disciples that His departure was at hand, He realized two things about them: They were devastated emotionally by the impending loss of His personal presence among them; and they did not yet understand all the things they would need to know after His return to the Father. He was not without a plan for meeting these needs. He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell each member of His Church. **John 16:4–7 4b ...** *“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.* Jesus understands our weaknesses and arranges our experience with Himself in such a way that we receive just the right understanding at just the right time. He is a Master Teacher. We will discuss this further in the last section of tonight’s study, so for the moment we’ll concentrate our thoughts on the promise of the Spirit’s coming. Note first in verse 4b the great privilege the disciples had enjoyed: The personal presence of God had been granted to them through Christ’s bodily ministry among them. He had been with them, and their hearts had treasured His nearness. Our hearts long for God’s presence. We hunger for the separation from our Creator caused by Adam’s sin to be done away with. Now that Jesus had revealed to them that He was returning to the Father, they were devastated, emotionally, as verses 5 and 6 show. So fixed were they on His departure, that they hadn’t bothered to ask, “Where are you going?” They simply were consumed with sorrow at the thought of His leaving. But Jesus had prepared an antidote: He would send the Holy Spirit in His place, indwelling each cell in His new earthly Body, the Church. During His time on earth Jesus was perfectly filled with the Spirit of God. After His departure the disciples would be filled with that same presence of God, the Holy Spirit. Jesus wouldn’t really be leaving them alone. In a real sense He would be more intimately present with them than ever. And He would be at work in the world through His Spirit’s power in them.

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[DOCTRINAL POINT] The first work of the Spirit is to restore God’s presence among His people.

[ILLUSTRATION] Suppose you wake in the middle of the night and find that the room in which you are sleeping is perfectly dark. You know you are alone. There is no one around you; no one else in the room. Perhaps this makes you feel secure, or perhaps it makes you feel a bit uneasy. But how would what you feel change if suddenly you heard someone else cough and you realized you were not alone? It might be startling at first, but then you remember: a beloved friend or family member is also in the room with you. You might feel a sense of relief and comfort knowing that you were not alone.

[APPLICATION] Any believer who feels alone, separated from God, needs to realize that such a thing is simply not possible. The moment we put our faith in Christ, a beloved family member moves into the room of our heart – the Holy Spirit comes. When we put our faith in Christ, Jesus turns to the Father and asks for the Spirit to be sent to indwell us. If you’ve put your faith in Christ, if you hunger for His Word, if sins burdens and grieves you – either your sins or the sins of others around you – if your heart is longing for the presence of the Lord, my dear friend, the Spirit of God lives in you. You are not alone. By the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in each believing heart, man’s separation from God has been substantially healed.

(vv.8-11) The Work of the Spirit Through the Church: Conviction – The work the Spirit would do through Christ’s Church after His departure had two aspects. One focus of the Spirit’s ministry would be directed toward those outside the Body of Christ. He would have a ministry through His people to those still living in the World. The second aspect of the Spirit’s ministry would be directed toward the Church. We’ll look at that in our next section, verses 12 through 15. In verses 8-11, we are told that the Spirit’s work toward the World outside the Church would be one of conviction. **John 16:8–11** - **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.* The word “conviction” goes beyond the idea of mere reproof and carries instead the thought of a judicial sentence pronounced on wrong doers. Those under conviction do not merely see themselves as having *done* something wrong; they have come to understand that *they are* something wrong. Through the normal agencies of conscience and commonly accepted morality, even unbelievers will recognize that they sin. But conviction goes far beyond that reproof. Conviction brings to the heart the knowledge that *the heart itself* is corrupt. This ministry of conviction the Spirit does through His presence in the Church. The indwelling presence of Jesus, observable in the Body of Christ convicts the World in three specific area: sin, righteousness, and judgment.

- Sin – Most people have a mistaken idea of sin, thinking of it as simply a violation of God’s laws. In this they are mistaking “sin” for “sins.” To violate God’s law is to commit sins, but sin itself is something much deeper and more serious: it is to reject God’s Messenger and God’s message. “Sins” send no one to hell. Everyone who goes to hell goes there for one reason alone: they are sinners - those who reject God’s Messenger,

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Jesus, and God’s message of grace. Through the work of the Church, the Holy Spirit does His convicting work of convincing men that they are sinners.

- Righteousness – Note carefully that verse 10 does not say that the Spirit convicts the World of *unrighteousness*, but of *righteousness*. In other words, through the Spirit’s work in the Church, the World is convicted of rejecting the righteous Christ. Christ’s righteousness is proven once and for all by the fact that He has returned to His Father’s side in heaven. To reject God’s Messenger and message is to reject His righteousness in Christ. Through the work of the Church, the Holy Spirit does His convicting work of convincing men of the righteousness of Christ.
- Judgment – The Spirit also convicts the World of judgment through the Church’s work in the World. At the cross, Jesus passed sentence on the ruler of this present age, Satan, and all who are in league with him are under condemnation. Sentence has been passed and is simply awaiting being carried out at Christ’s return. The work of the Spirit is to convict or convince the people of this World that they are in trouble because they are sinners; they have rejected God’s righteousness; and they are under His judgement. It is through this conviction that men are drawn to Christ or seal their fate by refusing Him. The work of the Spirit is always done in hope that some will turn to Christ through the ministry of conviction. Through the work of the Church, the Holy Spirit does His convicting work of convincing men that they are under judgment.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] The Spirit’s presence in the Church convicts the World of sin and righteousness and judgment.

[ILLUSTRATION] There have been times in naval warfare when an enemy has attempted to cast blame on another for an attack by “flying a false flag.” Instead of flying the flag of its true nationality, an attacker might hoist the flag of another nation in order to cast blame for the attack elsewhere. In order for the Spirit to do the convicting work He desires to do through the Church, it is of utmost importance that the Church show only her true colors as those who belong to Christ.

[APPLICATION] When Christians fail to live up to Christ’s commands, we fly a false flag as far as the World is concerned, and become useless to the Spirit in His convicting ministry. It is of utmost importance that Christians and the Church live faithfully before a watching world. We cannot afford to compromise our testimony. Too much is at stake. We are Christ’s appointed means for convicting the World of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Make sure you’re not flying a false flag.

(VV.12-15) The Work of the Spirit for the Church: Guidance and Glory – The Spirit not only has a work toward the World, but He also has a work toward the Church. His mission is to direct the Church in its work on earth, and to glorify Christ through that work on earth. **John 16:12–15 - 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*

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mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. We mentioned in our first section Christ’s work as a Master Teacher of His people and this principle shines brightly in these verses. Warren Wiersbe points out the beauty of the Spirit’s ministry of bringing believers to an understanding of the truth at just the right moment. Compare John 14:26 to John 16:13 to see a beautiful example of this through the organization of Scripture. **John 14:26 - 26** *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.* **John 16:13 - 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.* Wiersbe notes that John 14:26 explains the Apostle’s writing down of the Gospels. The Spirit brought to their memories all that Jesus wanted recorded there. John 16:13 speaks of the writing of the epistles when it says, *“he will guide you into all truth.”* At the time of Jesus speaking the writing of the epistles was still years in the future. Nevertheless, they are just as inspired as the gospels, thanks to the Spirit’s ministry in the Church. Finally, when Jesus said, *“he will declare to you the things that are to come,”* Wiersbe points us toward the prophecy of the Book of Revelation. In just this same progressive way the Spirit has a present ministry of guiding the Church by opening God’s mind to believers through God’s Word at just the time guidance is needed. “The work of the Spirit,” says Wiersbe, “is never, ever divorced from Christ and His Word. He is the Spirit of Truth. Christ is the Truth and God’s Word is the Truth.” The Spirit guides the Church by opening our minds to the truth of God’s Word as we are able to understand and in the moment of our greatest need.

But the Spirit has another ministry as well. The Spirit delights to glorify Christ in the Church (vv.14-15). Notice that the Spirit glorifies Christ by “[taking] *what is mine and declaring it to you.*” The Spirit glorifies Christ, never Himself. He delights to share God’s revelation through Christ, by pointing us to Christ. When the Spirit fills the Church, Christ is glorified.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] The work of the Spirit is to guide the Church through the Word of God and to glorify Christ above all else.

[ILLUSTRATION] “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will do,” the Cheshire Cat famously said to Alice, in Wonderland.

[APPLICATION] In order for the Church and her individual believers to be guided by the Spirit and to glorify Christ, Christians must devote themselves to the study of God’s Word. Many believers fall into grievous traps of Satan every year simply because they are not devoted to knowing and practicing God’s Word. Don’t you be one of them! Love the book. Ask the Spirit to teach you the truth. He delights to answers such prayers because He knows that in this way Christians will be safeguarded and Christ will be glorified.

Conclusion: In Christ Jesus, the work of restoration has begun. Jesus came to undo sin’s damage and through the outpoured Spirit the first step has been taken to fully restoring man’s fellowship with God. When will the last step be taken? When will God and man once again dwell together in fullness? Our Bible’s tell us that this blessing is waiting for fulfillment at Jesus’

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Second Coming. In the meantime, the Spirit has come to indwell the Church and through the Church He is hard at work in the world. We are not alone. Christ is with us through His Spirit in the Church.