



JOHN 16:5-15

Listening to the Spirit

DAY ONE Observation

John 1-12 record the public ministry of Jesus to the nation, while chapters 13-17 record the private ministry of Jesus with His disciples. Those who find the Messiah are taught what it means to follow Him.

The reaction of the disciples to Jesus' predictions was depression. To dispel the gloom, He informed them that His departure was not just an inevitable calamity which must be endured but a necessity to the progress of the work. It would be profitable for Him to go, because His death would enlarge His ministry through the activity of the Holy Spirit. —Merrill Tenney

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read John 16:5-15. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Record the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

⁵“But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless 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 depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹of 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. ¹³However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. ¹⁵All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you. (NKJV)

Jesus' words to the disciples on this Passover night filled their hearts with sorrow. Try to put yourself in their shoes. Try to imagine what that night would be like. Try to imagine the emotions and thoughts they had as they listened to Jesus' words in John 13-16. He would be betrayed (13:21). He would be going away (13:33). Peter would deny Him three times (13:38). The ruler of the world is coming (14:30). His disciples would be hated and persecuted (15:20).

What thoughts would be going through your mind as you heard these words from Jesus?

Why is it an advantage for Jesus to go away? (16:7)

Circle the actions of the Holy Spirit in this passage. What will the Spirit do when He comes?

What three things will the Holy Spirit convict the world of when He comes? And what reason is given for each conviction? (16:8-11)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Write down at least five things that you learn about the Holy Spirit from 16:12-15.

DAY THREE
Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type “John 16:8” into the “Search the Bible” box. Next click on John 16:8 to bring up the verse in the Greek (or select “Interlinear” from the Tools menu). Find the word “reprove” and click on the Strong’s number (G1651) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in other passages in the New Testament.

What is the Greek word for “reprove”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the New Testament? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (See Strong’s Definition) _____

This word is rich in meaning and hard to translate. Click on Trench’s Synonyms (just above the KJV Translation Count). Though some of Trench’s words may be hard to understand, take particular note of the last sentence of his first paragraph. How does Trench define this word?

Look at the following passages in the NT that use this word. How is the word used in each passage? How is it translated? What else can you observe about the word’s meaning?

Matthew 18:15 _____

Luke 3:19 _____

John 3:20 _____

James 2:9 _____

Based on what you have learned, what does it mean that the Spirit “convicts” or “reproves” the world? How would you describe the Spirit’s conviction in people’s hearts?

DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on John*.

16:5-7. We find *our Lord giving a special reason why it was expedient for Him to go away from His disciples*. "If I do not go away," He says, "the Comforter will not come unto you."

We can well suppose that our gracious Lord saw the minds of His disciples crushed at the idea of His leaving them. Little as they realized His full meaning, on this, as well as on other occasions, they evidently had a vague notion that they were about to be left, like orphans, in a cold and unkind world, by their Almighty Friend. Their hearts quailed and shrunk back at the thought. Most graciously does our Lord cheer them by words of deep and mysterious meaning. He tells those who His departure, however painful it might seem, was not an evil, but a good. They would actually find it was not a loss, but a gain. His bodily absence would be more useful than His presence.

...It seems at first sight hard to understand how in any sense it could be good that Christ should go away from His disciples. Yet a little reflection may show us that, like our Lord's sayings, this remarkable utterance was wise, and right, and true. The following points, at any rate, deserve attentive consideration.

If Christ had not died, risen again, and ascended up into heaven, it is plain that the Holy Spirit could not have come down with special power on the day of Pentecost, and bestowed His manifold gifts on the Church. Mysterious as it may be, there was a connection in the eternal counsels of God, between the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit.

If Christ had remained bodily with the disciples, He could not have been in more

places than one at the same time. The presence of the Spirit whom He sent down, would fill every place where believers were assembled in His name, in every part of the world.

If Christ had remained upon earth, and not gone up into heaven, He could not have become a High Priest for His people in the same full and perfect manner that He became after His ascension. He went away to sit down at the right hand of God, and to appear for us, in our human nature glorified, as our Advocate with the Father.

Finally, if Christ had always remained bodily with His disciples, there would have been far less room for the exercise of their faith and hope and trust, than there was when He went away. Their graces would not have been called into such active exercise, and they would have had less opportunity of glorifying God, and exhibiting His power in the world.

After all, there remains the broad fact that after the Lord Jesus went away, and the Comforter came down on the day of Pentecost, the religion of the disciples became a new thing altogether. The growth of their knowledge, and faith, and hope, and zeal, and courage, was so remarkable, that they were twice the men they were before. They did far more for Christ when He was absent, than they had ever done when He was present. What stronger proof can we require that it was expedient for those who their Master should go away!

16:8-15. When our Lord in this passage speaks of the Holy Spirit "coming," we must take care that we do not misunderstand His meaning. On the one hand, we must remember that the Holy Spirit was in all

believers in the Old Testament days, from the very beginning. No man was ever saved from the power of sin, and made a saint, except by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Abraham, and Isaac, and Samuel, and David, and the Prophets, were made what they were by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, we must never forget that after Christ's ascension the Holy Spirit was poured down on men with *far greater energy* as individuals, and with *far wider influence* on the nations of the world at large, than He has ever poured out before. It is this increased energy and influence that our Lord has in view in the verses before us. He meant that after His own ascension the Holy Spirit would "come" down into the world with such *a vastly increased power*, that it would seem as if He had "come" for the first time, and had never been in the world before.

The difficulty of rightly explaining the wondrous sayings of our Lord in this place is undeniably very great. It may well be doubted whether the full meaning of His words has ever been entirely grasped by man, and whether there is not something at the bottom which has not been completely unfolded. The common, superficial explanation, that our Lord only meant that the work of the Spirit in saving individual believers is to convince them of their own sins, of Christ's righteousness, and of the certainty of judgment at last, will hardly satisfy thinking minds. It is a short-cut and superficial way of getting over Scripture difficulties. It contains excellent and sound doctrine, no doubt, but it does not meet the full meaning of our Lord's words. It is truth, but not the truth of the text. It is not individuals here and there whom He says the Spirit is to convince, but the world. Let us

see whether we cannot find a fuller and more satisfactory interpretation.

For one thing, our Lord probably meant to *show us what the Holy Spirit would do to the world of unbelieving JEWS*. He would convince them "of sin, and righteousness, and judgment."

He would convince the Jews "of sin." He would compel them to feel and acknowledge in their own minds, that in rejecting Jesus of Nazareth they had committed a great sin, and were guilty of gross unbelief.

He would convince the Jews of "righteousness." He would press home on their consciences that Jesus of Nazareth was not an impostor and a deceiver, as they had said, but a holy, just, and blameless Person, whom God had owned by receiving up into heaven.

He would convince the Jews of "judgment." He would oblige them to see that Jesus of Nazareth had conquered, overcome, and judged the devil and all his host, and was exalted to be a Prince and a Savior at the right hand of God.

That the Holy Spirit did actually so convince the Jewish nation after the day of Pentecost, is clearly shown by the Acts of the Apostles. It was He who gave the humble fishermen of Galilee such grace and might in testifying of Christ, that their adversaries were put to silence. It was His reproving and convincing power which enabled them to "fill Jerusalem with their doctrine." Not a few of the nation, we know, were savingly convinced, like Paul, and "a great company of priests" became obedient to the faith. Myriads more, we have every reason to believe, were mentally convinced, if they had not courage to come out and take up the cross. The whole tone of the Jewish people towards the

end of the Acts of the Apostles is unlike what it is at the beginning. A vast reproofing and convincing influence even where not saving, seems to have gone over their minds. Surely this was partly what our Lord had in view in these verses when He said, "The Holy Spirit shall reprove and convince."

For another thing, our Lord probably meant to *foretell what the Holy Spirit would do for the whole of MANKIND, both Gentiles as well as Jews.*

He would reprove in every part of the earth the current ideas of men about sin, righteousness, judgment, and convince people of some far higher ideas on these points than they had before acknowledged. He would make men see more clearly *the nature of sin, the need of righteousness, the certainty of judgment.* In a word, He would insensibly be an Advocate and convincing Pleader for God throughout the whole world, and raise up a standard of morality, purity and knowledge, of which formerly men had no conception.

That the Holy Spirit actually did so in every part of the earth, after the day of Pentecost, is a simple matter of fact. The unlearned and lowly Jews, whom He sent forth and strengthened to preach the Gospel after our Lord's ascension, "turned the world upside down," and in two or three centuries altered the habits, tastes, and practices of the whole civilized world. The power of the devil received a decided check. Even infidels dare not deny that the doctrines of Christianity

had an enormous effect on men's ways, lives, and opinions, when they were first preached, and that there were no special graces or eloquence in the preachers that can account for it. In truth, the world was "reproved and convinced," in spite of itself; and even those who did not become believers became better men. Surely this also was partly what our Lord had in view when He said to His disciples, "When the Holy Spirit comes, He shall convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment."

Let us leave the whole passage, deep and difficult as it is, with a thankful remembrance of one comfortable promise which it contains. "The Spirit of truth," says our Lord to His weak and half-informed followers, "shall guide you into all truth." That promise was for our sakes, no doubt, as well as for theirs. Whatever we need to know for our present peace and sanctification, the Holy Spirit is ready to teach us. All truth in science, nature, and philosophy of course is not included in this promise. But into all *spiritual* truth that is really profitable, and that our minds can comprehend and bear, the Holy Spirit is ready and willing to guide us. Then let us never forget, in reading the Bible, to pray for the teaching of the Holy Spirit. We must not wonder if we find the Bible a dark and difficult book, if we do not regularly seek light from Him by whom it was first inspired. In this, as in many other things, "we have not because we ask not."

What stands out to you from Ryle's words? Why?

DAY FIVE
Application

Re-read John 16:5-15 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your daily life.

What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of John 16:5-15? Why?

The Spirit's ministry is to convict the world, guide believers into God's truth, and glorify Christ.

Reflect for a moment on the Spirit's conviction of the world. The Spirit works in every person's heart, in some way, to show them that there is a perfect standard of righteousness, they fall short of it (sin), and they will be held accountable for it (judgment). People resist the work of the Spirit by self-justifying their behavior (i.e., excuses), blaming others, or simply overloading their lives with so much distraction and busyness that they do not have time to hear His voice.

Think back in your own life. How did you first become aware of your sin? How did the Spirit first get your attention and point you to your need for a Savior? Did you resist at first? If so, why?

As believers, the Spirit continues to expose sin in our hearts and guide us toward God's truth—truth about Himself and truth about our own lives. In what area(s) of your life is the Spirit speaking to you today? What truth from Scripture is He bringing to the forefront of your mind?

Ultimately, the Spirit glorifies Christ. What are you thankful for in Christ Jesus today? Let the Spirit fill you today, putting a song in your heart and thanksgiving in your mouth! (Eph. 5:18-21)
