

## The Holy Spirit's Reproval.

Text: John 16:5-15

1) Concerning Sin

Suggested Hymns:

2) Concerning Righteousness

248, 327, 125, 127, 170

3) Concerning Judgement

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 16:5-15, <sup>5</sup> *“But now I go away 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> *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the [Comforter] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.* <sup>8</sup> *And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:* <sup>9</sup> *of sin, because they do not believe in Me;* <sup>10</sup> *of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;* <sup>11</sup> *of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

<sup>12</sup> *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.* <sup>13</sup> *However, 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.*

<sup>14</sup> *He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.* <sup>15</sup> *All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In our Gospel Jesus promises to His disciples His Holy Spirit. He had informed them that He would soon leave them and go to the Father, that is, that by His death, resurrection, and ascension He would return to from where He had come, to heaven.

Then they would see Him no more. He would no more be with them visibly, to guide and to teach them as He had done during the past three years. Although

the disciples did not comprehend the full meaning of their Master's words, yet from His remarks they gathered so much that He was about to leave them; and this made them sad.

But Jesus tells them, *“<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the [Comforter] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”* And then He informs them what the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would do: that He would guide them into all truth, and show them things to come, and, above all things, that He would glorify Jesus, that is, extol and exalt Jesus in their own hearts.

And how gloriously this promise was fulfilled! On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down upon them visibly in the shape of tongues as of fire. And what a wonderful change He produced in these men! He guided them into all truth, showed them things to come, and glorified Jesus.

From the moment they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they were imbued with a profound knowledge of the great deeds of God for the salvation of man, and were enabled to proclaim those great deeds in languages which they had never learned.

From the moment they were filled with the Holy Spirit they were endowed with dauntless courage and with power from on high. Boldly they stood up before Jewish and Gentile mobs, before kings and rulers, and bore witness of what they themselves had heard and seen of Jesus.

From the moment they were filled with the Holy Spirit Jesus was glorified in their hearts. They saw His glory now. They no longer expected Him to establish a worldly kingdom and to be a worldly ruler. They saw in Him the exalted Lord sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead, and there was not another name that sounded sweeter in their ears than the name of Jesus.

Such was the operation of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's disciples. And to this day God's Holy Spirit has His divine work among Christians in particular. We know that to the Spirit of God we owe our conversion and salvation, that it is the Holy Spirit who calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in the true faith.

But the Holy Spirit does not only deal with the followers of Christ in particular. He ***“convicts the world,”*** as Christ says in our Gospel, that is, He also addresses the children of men in general.

And what Christ says here about the Holy Spirit’s dealing with the world does not merely apply to unbelievers, but to Christians also, inasmuch as they are still in the world and retain their sinful flesh as long as they live upon the earth. Let us consider with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, *The Holy Spirit’s Reproof*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. Concerning Sin

Jesus says, ***“<sup>8</sup> And when [the Holy spirit] has come, He will [reprove] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”*** Here we must inquire into the meaning of the word “reprove.” The word “reprove,” as used in this connection, does not mean merely to censure, but to convict.

In convicting the world the Holy Spirit brings home to the children of men their errors, and makes them see that they are open to the condemnation of their conscience.

And of what does the Holy Spirit convict the world? In the first place, of sin. Take note that, although the Holy Spirit is opposed to all sins, yet Jesus does not mention particular sins. He does not publish a long list of sins of which the Holy Spirit would convict the world. No; He mentions but one sin, one particular sin. He says, ***“of sin, because they do not believe in Me.”*** Unbelief — that is the sin of which the Holy Spirit convicts the world.

Is there a sin which is more widespread, more universal than unbelief? Like a disease, like a pestilence, this sin has seized upon the world, and there is no abatement. To this day the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of this world are composed of heathen, Islam, and Jews.

And look at our own country. It has been said that this is a Christian nation. But what do our statistics say? They have disclosed the startling revelation that in 2021, only 21% of Australians attend church frequently (at least monthly) and among frequent attenders only 13% attend church weekly.<sup>1</sup>

Think of it, there are four unbelievers to one professed believer. And if the professed believers were sifted down and only the true believers in Christ Jesus were to remain, how the number of believers would dwindle down!

How many members are there of Christian churches who have never known what faith in Christ Jesus is, or have lost the faith! To this day it is true what John says of Jesus, the Light of the world, *“<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”<sup>2</sup>* Unbelief is the great universal sin, and, therefore, the Holy Spirit must convict the world of sin because they do not believe in the Lord Jesus.

And unbelief is a sin which is not acknowledged to be sin by the children of this world. People will readily admit that it is a sin to lie and to steal; but tell an unbeliever that it is a sin not to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will laugh you in the face.

He will say, *Are not my thoughts my own? Am I responsible for my convictions? Can I be blamed for not believing as long as I am not convinced of the truth of the Gospel? On the contrary, would it not be a moral wrong for me to pretend faith without conviction?*

But before the tribunal of the Holy Spirit the unbeliever's arguments in defence of his unbelief are reduced to a folly. By the Word of God the Holy Spirit can make the unbeliever tremble and perceive that unbelief is indeed the sin, the greatest sin in the world, the sin which makes all the rest of sins remain unforgiven, the sin which is sure to lead into eternal condemnation.

The Holy Spirit will address him and say, 'How dare you make light of your unbelief? It is nothing less than rebellion against your divine Maker. You have thereby been giving the lie to your God. You have discredited His divine Word and despised your own salvation. You have sinned against God and against yourself, rejecting your own eternal welfare; for as we read in Mark 16:16, *<sup>16</sup>He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*'

O my friends, let us all be on our guard against this terrible sin which is sure to hurl the unbeliever into eternal condemnation. Many a Christian believed for a while, and in the time of temptation he fell away. Many a one has made shipwreck of faith.

Let us remain continually under the influence of God's Holy Spirit, hearing the Word of God and searching the Scriptures, and we shall keep the faith.

It is to the Christians that St. Paul says, "*let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall,*"<sup>3</sup> and, "*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*"<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Concerning Righteousness

The Holy Spirit, secondly, convicts the world of righteousness, "*Of righteousness,*" says Jesus, "*because I go to My Father and you see Me no more.*"

Now what righteousness is this? What has righteousness to do with Christ's going to the Father and being seen no more? We must remember that Jesus said this shortly before His suffering and death. His going to the Father led over Calvary.

He did not simply mean that He must die and depart from this world, but that He must go to the Father by way of sacrificing His life for the sins of the world, that by perfect obedience unto death He must work out a spotless righteousness for all people.

The righteousness, then, of which the Holy Spirit convicts the world is that righteousness which Jesus wrought by His sinless life and vicarious suffering and death, that righteousness of which we say, *Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress.*<sup>5</sup>

And why does the Holy Spirit convict the world of this righteousness? Because the world does neither know of, nor care for, this righteousness. Very many of the children of this world never think of preparing for the hereafter.

And those who do believe in a blessed hereafter seek to get there by their own righteousness. By nature we all do not know otherwise and do not think otherwise than that, if there is another life beyond the grave, we must be good and do good in this world, that we may obtain eternal life; we must do at least the best we can, and rely on the mercy of a good God for the rest; in short, we must do the work ourselves and expect heaven as a reward for our good deeds.

Now the Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning the righteousness of Christ which He has wrought out for the whole sinful world. He addresses man

by the Word of God and says to him, *How dare you expect to gain heaven by your own righteousness?* You are a sinner and before God all your righteousnesses are as filthy rags.<sup>6</sup> You are born in sin, and polluted with sin, and corrupted from head to foot. All that you are, say, and do, is sin. Your very hope of expecting eternal life for your own good deeds is sin, an act of disobedience.

You are lost, eternally lost, if by your own sinful righteousness you attempt to gain heaven. But lo! God has made provision for you in His great love. He does not want you to die in your sins and be eternally lost. He sent His beloved Son into the world to work out for you that righteousness which you cannot achieve, because you are a sinner.

He had Jesus lead for you, in your stead, a life without sin, and had Him atone for your transgressions by His suffering and death on the cross.

And now you must appropriate to yourself this righteousness of Jesus the Saviour; you must believe in Christ and build all your hope for a blissful hereafter on Jesus' blood and righteousness. That is the way to eternal salvation, and the only way; there is no other.

Let us all make sure of Christ's righteousness, then. Also Christians are sometimes tempted to forget that it is Jesus alone who has saved them, and to seek help elsewhere than in the wounds of Him who died that we might live.

Let us always bear in mind that there is no salvation in any other, and that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the blessed name of Jesus.

### **3. Concerning Judgement**

The Holy Spirit convicts the world, thirdly, of judgement. "*Of judgment,*" says Jesus, "*because the ruler of this world is judged.*" The ruler of this world is the devil. He is judged. Judgement was pronounced against him when Jesus suffered and died and rose again from the dead.

By sin Satan had dominion over all the children of men. He was their master. They were bound to him by the fetters of sin and could not escape from the prison of hell which he had prepared for them.

But by Christ's going to the Father, by Christ's glorious work of redemption, the tie has been removed by which fallen man is bound to the ruler of darkness. Sin is taken away. It is no more charged to those who believe in the Redeemer.

The old serpent's head is bruised and crushed, and he has no longer any power over man, unless man himself prefers to remain in his power and willingly serves his greatest foe.

Satan has been dethroned and sentenced by our Redeemer's blessed work. The sentence will be executed on the last day, which may come upon the world at any time.

And why does the Holy Spirit convict the world of judgement because the ruler of the world is judged? That men might know whom they are really serving in sin and unbelief. They are serving the devil, from whose power they have actually been rescued by the Redeemer. They are serving the devil, who is sentenced to eternal torment.

The Holy Spirit addresses man by the Word of God and says to him, '*What folly to serve a master whom you are not obliged to serve, a master who treats you even worse than the worst tyrant, who for a short while delights you with the pleasures of sin, and then makes you suffer for it, suffer often already in this life and then suffer eternally!*'

Look at the judgement of the ruler of this world. His doom is sealed. Scripture says in Jude 6, ***And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode,*** (which includes the devil) ***[The LORD] has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.***

And his fate shall be your fate, if you do not quit the devil's service, and commend yourself into the hands of Jesus who has redeemed, purchased, and won you from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.

O let us be careful, then, not to commit our ransomed souls to Satan's power. Let us continually pray to the Lord to deliver us from temptation and not to take His Holy Spirit from us. And thus, by the grace of God, we shall conquer the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, and finally receive the salvation of our souls. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> National Church Life Survey, [www.ncls.org.au/articles/australians-attending-church/](http://www.ncls.org.au/articles/australians-attending-church/)

<sup>2</sup> John 1:10

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:12

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:5

<sup>5</sup> Hymn 327

<sup>6</sup> Isa 64:6