

**The Holy Spirit: God's Prosecutor**

Scripture: John 16:8–11

Code: 43-89

John, chapter 16. This is a portion of Scripture that every preacher must understand: every preacher must understand, every pastor must understand, every parishioner, every Christian must understand. The text before us foundational to our mission. It is foundational to our cause in the world. It is the foundation of all gospel preaching and all gospel witness. And since the church is in the world to proclaim the gospel, we need to know what this passage teaches.

Like many passages, however, in the Bible, it has a ring of familiarity to us, and people somehow think they know what it means, and they don't really dig down to see the truth that is here. I want to be able to help you to understand it, perhaps, in a way you've never understood it before, and the way that it has to be understood in the context and the intention of our Lord. I think I'm safe in saying that most preachers don't really get a grasp on this, as most Christians do not, and that is a crippling reality.

Now, where are we in John 16? Well, it's the last night our Lord spent with His disciples, a Thursday night, Passover night in Jerusalem before His death on Friday. This is His final time with His disciples. Starting in chapter 13, He's been speaking to His disciples all the way up to 16, and He's still talking to them. The nation of Israel has rejected Him; they've rejected Him.

John begins the gospel – chapter 1, verse 11 – by saying, “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” We have clear indication at the very beginning of the story that they were not going to receive Him. They rejected Jesus – the nation of Israel did – but not in a benign way, not in a sort of moderate way. They rejected Him in a violent way, a violent way. On several occasions, they tried to kill Him unsuccessfully throughout His life and ministry; but finally succeeded in blackmailing Pilate, the Roman governor, so that Pilate would execute Him by torture on a cross. This result of the rejection of the nation Israel of their Messiah and Savior, the Son of God.

On top of the rejection of the nation, Jesus was telling His disciples that He was going to die, that He was going to fall into their hands, and they were going to take Him and mistreat Him, and then they were going to execute Him. Beyond that, He would rise and leave them. All of this was shattering to their hopes and expectations and ambitions. They had great ambition about what was going to happen to them because they were so closely attached to the Messiah, and they assumed He would set up the kingdom promised in the Old Testament, establish His throne in Jerusalem, throw out all the enemies of Israel, bring salvation to Israel, and from the throne in Jerusalem rule the world. That's what the Old Testament promised Messiah would do. They were expecting to sit on His right an left hand in the kingdom to be elevated to high places.

But instead of that, the whole nation has rejected Him. He has done nothing to overpower them, He has done nothing to overpower the Romans who occupy Israel, and now He is saying they're going to kill Him. He's going to be arrested, taken prisoner, mistreated, and executed. And that is God's plan for Him so that He can be the only acceptable sacrifice for sin: to die for sinners, rise from the

dead – as God validates the sufficiency of His death – and provide eternal life to all who will repent and believe in Him throughout all of history.

The disciples don't like the plan. In fact, they almost pushed the reality of it away from themselves, unwilling to accept it. They're struggling greatly with the idea that Jesus is going to die. They're struggling greatly with the idea that He is going to leave them. This is such a great struggle for Judas who is not a true believer. He is so disillusioned that he actually sells Jesus for thirty pieces of silver just to get some cash for the three years he wasted. He becomes a betrayer, and then a suicide, and then ends up in hell.

To make matters worse, not only is Jesus leaving them – which is bad enough – but He tells them in the 15th chapter, that the world that hated Him will hate them, that the world that persecuted Him will persecute them, and that the world that kills Him will kill them. This is as bad as it could possibly get, as bad as it could possibly get: "He's going to die, He's going to leave, and then they're going to start persecuting us and killing us."

The questions that arise in their mind are pretty obvious. "You said You were preparing a place for us in heaven. How are we going to get there? How do we have an assurance that we're going to get there?" One of the disciples said, "We don't know where You're going and we don't know how to get there. How are we going to ever end up in heaven?"

Another question that must have flooded their minds was, "How are we going to remain faithful in this world full of temptation and hatred and animosity? Where's the strength going to come from? Where's the power going to come from? Where are we going to get the resources we need to survive?"

And then the question, "How are we going to be able to receive everything You've promised us when You're not here to dispense the promises? You told us You'd give us love and joy and peace. You told us You'd answer all our prayers. And You told us that You would give us power, and You told us that You would give us wisdom, and You told us that all of heaven's resources would be granted to us. How are we going to receive those if You're not here? And how will we be able to confront this hating, hostile, persecuting world with the gospel, which they resent, and have any success in our mission?" They had gone on some short-term missions to some villages and it didn't turn out well.

So all of these questions are in their minds; and, essentially, our Lord gives them one answer: "I'm going, but the Holy Spirit is coming, and He is another exactly like Me. As I am God, He is God. As I have been with you, He will be in you. He will come. He will be the one who basically fulfills all the promises. He will be the one who gives you strength against the temptations of the world. He will be the one who deposits in you all the heavenly answers to your prayers. He will be the one who teaches you, tells you what to say, enables you to testify. The Holy Spirit will come and do all of that."

Now, He has referred to the Holy Spirit a number of times, and I just want you to look at what is really the emphasis, the single emphasis of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Go back to chapter 14, verse 16, where He first tells them the Holy Spirit is going to come, the third member of the Trinity who is equally God. And He says in verse 16, "I'm going to give you another, another of the same kind, *allos*, exactly like Myself, who will be with you forever," and He identifies Him in verse 17 as the Spirit of truth, as the Spirit of truth. Very important that they understand that the role and ministry of the

Holy Spirit primarily is to give you the truth, is to give you truth.

“He’s going to give you love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control,” as Paul said. “He’s going to provide for you strength and witness. He’s going to deposit heavenly treasures in your personal life and account. He’s going to do all of those things. But, primarily, He is the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of truth – ” go down to verse 26 “ – will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

The primary ministry of the Holy Spirit to the apostles, apart from being in them, to give them all spiritual graces, all heavenly blessings, all that they need to function in the world to the glory of God. Apart from that, “the Spirit’s great role is to provide for you the truth, to teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. The Holy Spirit is going to reveal truth to you, reveal to you the teaching of Christ.”

At the end of chapter 15, we get the same kind of emphasis, verse 26: “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father.” Again, the Spirit of truth, emphasizing that this primary ministry is to provide the truth. “He will testify about Me. That’s what He is going to do, testify about Me. So He’s going to teach you. He’s going to bring to remembrance everything I said, and He’s going to teach you about Me.” That really sums up what the Holy Spirit does in revealing Scripture. Scripture is divine teaching. It is the record of all that Jesus did and said, and it is all the epistles and letters that tell us what His life and ministry meant: “All the things that relate to Me.” That’s the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 13 of chapter 16 sums it up: “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak in His own initiative. Whatever He hears, He will speak. He will disclose to you what is to come.” That’s the full ministry of the Spirit. “He will tell you what I said. He will tell you all the instruction that God wants you to have. He will give you the truth and testify about Me, all that you need to know about Me, and then He will tell you the future.”

What you have there is the promise from the lips of Christ that the Holy Spirit will put all of that in their hands: the truth about Christ, the gospels; the story of Christ, everything He said, bringing that into remembrance, the teaching that Christ gave, “Then He will give you all the testimony to Christ by the epistles, and then He’ll tell you the future,” and that sweeps you through to the book of Revelation. This is a promise of divine inspiration of the New Testament. And the Holy Spirit was the one who moved in the lives of the apostles and those who were their associates to write the New Testament.

So I’ve been telling you that it is the internal ministry – listen to this carefully – it is the internal ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer to grant every promise that Christ ever gave, to bring the treasures of heaven down and deposit them in our lives. That’s His ministry in us. That’s the internal ministry. But there is going to be an external provision by the Holy Spirit, and He’s going to bring that through the apostles. Namely, He’s going to give us the New Testament. He’s going to give us the Scripture. And we know that all Scripture is God-breathed, and the Holy Spirit is the breath of God. And men were moved by the Holy Spirit to write what God inspired. So what we have here is the promise that the Holy Spirit will give the truth of God, give the Word of God, and we know that is contained in the New Testament.

Now, having said all of that, I want you to come to verse 8. And here within the framework of what the Spirit does is a very, very critical, significant ministry. “And He, the Spirit of truth – ” always tells the truth, always elucidates the truth, always proclaims the truth “ – when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment – ” those three things “ – concerning sin because they do not believe in Me, and concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me, and concerning judgment because the ruler of this world has been judged.” Very brief, very economic in terms of words; very, very definitive; very profound; very all-encompassing.

The revelation that our Lord gives in those verses, verses 8 to 11, has two purposes, okay. Purpose Number 1 is to be an encouragement to the hated and persecuted disciples, is to be an encouragement to the hated and persecuted disciples, and Christians throughout all of history. These are encouraging words.

Now, remember the context: “The world hates you,” all the way back in chapter 15, verse 18. And He went on talking about the world hating us, and because the world hated Him, and the world doesn’t know God. “And the world will persecute you – ” into chapter 16, “they’ll throw you out of the synagogue, they’ll kill you.”

In the face of that, it’s wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit is going to aid in fulfilling our mission, right? If we’re going to go to this hostile world, we’re going to have to have a supernatural power that comes to that hostile world to accomplish anything, and to break through the hatred and the animosity and the persecution.

Now, most people read this section I just read to you and they say, “Well, this is just saying that the Holy Spirit is going to work in the lives of nonbelievers to make them know that they’re sinful and they’re unrighteous, and they’re headed for judgment, and to make them feel guilty.” That’s not what this is about – not initially and not primarily. The Holy Spirit is going to do something for sure, and He’s going to do it to and for the unbelievers, to and for sinners. But it is not the point here that He’s doing something inside sinners. It’s pretty easy to see the word “convict” and sort of give it kind of a contemporary connotation when you say, “You know, I was convicted about overeating last night.” And what you mean by that is, “I felt bad.” “What do you mean I felt bad?” Or, “I have a conviction about that; I don’t do that.” We really throw this word around and give it a big, broad meaning.

Now, it is true – and I want to affirm that it is true – that no sinner will ever repent and believe the gospel without the Holy Spirit, right? We understand that; we get that. The Holy Spirit has to work in the mind of a sinner or that sinner can never be saved. The Holy Spirit has to break through, first of all, the sinner’s natural love for sin. Men are not only in the darkness, they’re not only blind and double-blinded by Satan, they love the darkness, right? They pursue their sin with deep affection. On their own, they’re not going to repent. They’re dead in trespasses and sin. They’re under control of the god of this world. They’re blinded by the god of this world. They’re alienated from the life of God. All that’s out of Ephesians.

Colossians, again, 1:21, “They’re alienated from God. They’re alienated from God. They’re hostile in their mind toward God.” Romans 1, Romans 1 says, “They’re under divine wrath.” Romans 3, “No one seeks after God. They’re all wicked. They’re all evil. None does good, no, not one.” So all human beings are in the dark, and they love the dark, and they cherish the dark, and they love the sin that dominates their lives.

So no one is going to repent and believe on his own. He doesn't have a capacity for that; it can't be done. That's why Jesus said in John 3, "Unless you're born of the Spirit, you're never going to have eternal life." Unless you're regenerated by the working of the Spirit, you're never going to live. God has to step into your blindness, into your darkness, and into your death and say, "Let there be light," 2 Corinthians 4; and He does that by the Holy Spirit.

Second Timothy 2:25 says, "It is God, through the Holy Spirit, who grants repentance." So, again, I want to affirm that that is true. No sinner can repent, no sinner will repent, no sinner even want to repent; therefore, no sinner can be given forgiveness, eternal life, salvation, and heaven apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. He has to do a work on the inside. He has to turn on the light. He has to give life, so we say He gives life and light. He grants repentance. He grants faith to believe the gospel: it's a work of God, through the Holy Spirit, in the sinner. They are awakened to their guilt, they are awakened to the terror of judgment, they are awakened to the truth of the gospel and they are granted faith to believe. That is the Spirit's work. But that is not the point here. That is not the point here – at least not in a primary sense. Certainly, it's an accompanying implication.

It is true the Holy Spirit will bring sinners to sorrow. The Holy Spirit will bring sinners to guilt. The Holy Spirit moves on the heart of sinners to send them fleeing to the only Savior for forgiveness, eternal life, and escape from judgment. And as the Holy Spirit does that work, more sinners escape the world and go from hating us and hating God and hating Christ, to loving us and loving God and loving Christ. That is a work of the Holy Spirit. But that is not what our Lord's talking about here.

What is He talking about? This is very important. Let's start with the word "convict" verse 8. By the way, this Greek verb *elegch* is translated a myriad of ways by New Testament translators, even in English. It has all kinds of translations even in one given translation like I use, the NAS. *Elegchó* – let me give you the sense of it – it's a legal word, okay. It's a legal word, and it takes us into court essentially. It means "to indict by evidence." It's a word that would fit a grand jury, for example. It is a word that could be translated "to prosecute."

And it can even be translated "to prove guilty," to prove guilty. It is a word that embraces the activity of a prosecutor and a judge in one. In a legal sense – let's say a non-legal sense, you might say, "Oh, I feel convicted." And by that, you mean, "I feel some guilt."

But take the word "convict" in a courtroom and it takes a completely different meaning. If you say, "A convict was convicted," you mean the trial is over. You're not talking about some emotional feeling. You're not talking about something inside. You're saying, "He was measured against the law and found guilty. The proof is in; the verdict is guilty." That's a conviction. That's the sense of this word.

The Holy Spirit is not here saying, "I'm going to make people feel bad about sinning." He's saying, "I'm going to render a final verdict, a final verdict," the evidence as in the verdict is given.

Now, let me show you a few ways this word is used. Go back to Luke 3:19. In Luke 3 we have John the Baptist. And you remember John the Baptist confronted Herod the tetrarch and the messed up, adulterous, incestuous relationship that he had with his brother's wife. And in 3:19, in the NAS it says, "But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by John the Baptist because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done."

Let me tell you something: reprimanded is not an adequate translation. John the Baptist didn't reprimand him, he convicted him. John the Baptist was a prosecutor. He prosecuted him, he accused him, he laid out the evidence, and he rendered a final verdict. All of that is in that word because it's the same word, *elegchó*, used there, same exact word translated rather whimsically with the word "reprimanded."

If you look at 1 Timothy, at the end of 1 Timothy in chapter 5, there's another illustration of it. "If you have an elder who sins and continues in sin –" verse 20 "– those who continue in sin –" and here it translates the same verb "– rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest may be fearful." This isn't rebuke, this is convict. What do you do with an elder who sins and won't repent? You prosecute him. You bring in the evidence, you make the accusation valid by the basis of the evidence, you prove him guilty, and then you render a verdict, okay. When somebody is sinning, it isn't just the rebuke, it's the final conviction based on the evidence. You are a prosecutor.

If you'll look at James again – and I'm just giving you some samples of how this word is used – James, chapter 2: "If you show partiality, if you don't love your neighbor as yourself –" verse 8 "– if you show partiality to people, you are committing sin –" and here's the right use of it "– and are convicted by the law as a transgressor." It isn't that you feel bad; it is that you've been prosecuted, you've been accused, the evidence is in, you're guilty. That's how that word is used.

In Revelation, last Sunday night, we were talking about the church at Laodicea. You have the same word used there. With regard to the church at Laodicea, chapter 3, verse 19, God says, "Those whom I love I convict, and then I discipline." It's a conviction and a discipline. So when we see this word here – let's go back to John, chapter 16. When we see this word here, it's telling us the Holy Spirit is going to literally render a final verdict on the world.

Go back to verse 8: "When He comes, He will convict the world." That mean He will find them guilty. He will prosecute them, He will roll out the evidence, and the final verdict is guilty – the whole world. A lot of people come to this passage and they kind of play around with, "What does world mean? What does world mean? Does it mean that the Lord, the Holy Spirit convicts every human being on the inside?" No, this isn't talking about that. The Holy Spirit is going to convict the whole world.

How does He do this? How does the Holy Spirit do this work of final conviction – conviction in the sense that you are a convicted criminal, a lawbreaker, a God-violator? How does the Holy Spirit do it? Listen, through preaching the Scripture, through preaching the Scripture, through testifying from the Scripture. The Scripture is the law, and if you have violated the Scripture, you are a lawbreaker and the proof is in, and you're convicted.

Let me give you an illustration, 1 Corinthians 14. The apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthian church and there's a lot of nonsense going on when they meet together, and he says in verse 23, "Unbelievers are going to come in and hear all this nonsense and they're going to think you're crazy, they're going to think you're mad." Then in verse 24 he says this: "But if all prophesy."

Now, prophesy doesn't mean predict the future – it tends to mean that in English – but it's the Greek word *prophemi* which means "to speak before." If you speak, if you get up and preach, let's say, if you testify or preach rather than speak in some kind of nonsense or gibberish – as they were doing

in Corinth – if you speak and an unbeliever or ungifted man enters, someone outside the economy of God, he is convicted and called to account.”

When a sinner comes into a church, if we're all mumbling mumbo-jumbo all over the place, they might think we're crazy. But if preaching is being done – and preaching assumes that we're speaking the Word of God – the sinner is convicted. Doesn't mean he feels bad; it means he is measured against the law of God and he is found guilty, and a final verdict is rendered. Very strong words.

In Ephesians, chapter 5, the Holy Spirit writes, “Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness; instead, convict them.” When you see people doing the unfruitful works of darkness which are forbidden by God as revealed according to His Word, convict them, indict them, accuse them, prove them guilty, and render them convicted.

The apostle Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, “Preach the word all the time, in season and out of season,” the first verb *elegchó*, convict. Go out in the world and measure people against the revelation of God and hold them as guilty, convicted criminals. That's what you do when you preach. To Titus, chapter 1, verse 9: “Hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, the Word of God, so that you will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to convict those who contradict. You take the Word and you preach it in Corinth, and you convict the unbeliever. You take the Word, Titus, and you go out and you proclaim it, and you convict those who contradict the Word.” Verse 13, he says it again: “For this reason, reprove them severely, convict them severely, that they may be sound in the faith.” Titus 2:15, “These things speak and exhort and convict with all authority. And let no one disregard you.”

I want you to understand what he's saying: those of us who preach the Word of God are the world's prosecutors. We are the world's prosecutors, we are God's select prosecutors; that's what we do. We do it by preaching; we do it in testimony.

Jesus is saying this to the disciples: “The Holy Spirit is going to reveal the truth.” First, called the Apostles' Doctrine. Eventually, it ends up in print in Scripture. And by means of the revelation of the Holy Spirit, you are going to be able to indict and prosecute and convict the world before God. Indictment, conviction, prosecution – that is what we do in preaching the gospel. The good news makes no sense if it's not a deliverance from a severe punishment for a severe violation of the law.

Now, let's go back a little bit, okay. Let's go back to the Old Testament. In every generation of history, in every generation of history, redemptive history, God had His prosecutors, God had His prosecutors. You would expect that, right? God is absolutely holy and man is fallen and sinful. So the Bible is just full of prosecutions, full of indictments, full of evidences, and full of convictions, full of guilt verdicts, full of judgments.

Go all the way back. Go all the way back to Enoch – way back in the beginning of Genesis. How do you know what he said? It's in Jude, 14. Listen, this is what it says about Enoch: “In the seventh generation from Adam – ” way, way back in Genesis, “ – Enoch preached.” And what was Enoch's message? He said, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

Whoa, that's a prosecution. That's a prosecution with plenty of evidence. And that's the first person actually identified as a preacher, a preacher. Enoch was a preacher, and he was a prosecutor. So were all the other prophets. All other prophets were prosecutors. Moses was a prosecutor. All the prophets that you read in the prophetic books were prosecutors. Elijah was a prosecutor. Elisha was a prosecutor. They were prophets of Israel.

But think about it: once in awhile they said things that were comforting – once in awhile. Once in awhile, they actually interceded for the people; but most of the time, they prosecuted their sins. They were prosecutors – far more than they were comforters, far more than they were intercessors. They indicted Israel; they indicted Judah; they indicted the nations. They indicted them for violations of the law of God; they indicted them for their immoralities and their idolatries that rendered them guilty before God so that we could honestly say that all the prophets were God's prosecutors through the whole Old Testament period. Their role was primarily to bring in accusation, and to bring evidence, and to render a guilt verdict on those who violated God's law. This led to a conviction of guilt. All, all the Old Testament prophets did this; all of them did it.

And, by the way, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and that's why they did it. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit for this. It's all over the Old Testament. And I'm not going to take time to trace it; you can find those things just about anyplace in the prophets, those indictments.

But let me just give you kind of an interesting illustration from Ezekiel 11, Ezekiel 11. The Spirit of the Lord lifts up Ezekiel and takes him into the Lord's house and tells him to preach, verse 4, tells him to preach: "Preach." Verse 5: "The Spirit of the Lord then comes on him and says, 'Say this, say this, from the Lord: So you think, house of Israel, for I know your thoughts. I know what you're thinking. You have multiplied your slain in this city, filling its streets with them. Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "Your slain whom you have laid in the midst of the city are the flesh and the city is the pot; but I will bring you out of it. You have feared a sword; so I will bring a sword upon you," the Lord God declares. "And I'll bring you out of the midst of the city and deliver you into the hands of strangers and execute judgments against you, and you will fall by the sword. I will judge you to the border of Israel. You'll know that I am the Lord."'"

Wow, that's a prosecution. That's an indictment, accusations, evidence, a verdict, and judgment. That's typically what the prophets did, and they did it under the direction of the Spirit of the Lord; and they did it to nations who violated the Word of God, the law of God.

For 400 years there was no prophet in Israel. There was no prosecution going on. There were no prosecutors. And then there appeared one by the name of John the Baptist. We meet him in the gospels in the New Testament. And he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb because the Holy Spirit was going to empower him as a prosecutor. And what was John's ministry? If you went down to the river, what would you hear John saying? "You snakes. You vipers. Who warned you to flee the wrath to come?" You would hear John saying those kinds of things that were intended to terrify sinners and to indict them. You would hear him say, "When the one who is coming arrives, He's going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor and gather the wheat into His barn, and He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." With many other exhortations, he preached the gospel.

And the next verse says, "And he convicted Herod of his immorality." John was a prosecutor. He was a classic prophet. He was a prosecutor of those who did evil. He frightened people. He was moved in

the power of the Holy Spirit to indict people because they violated the Word of God, and he prosecuted them. He accused them, he indicted them, he laid out the proof, he rendered a final conviction of the world of its sin, its failure to be righteous, and of coming judgment. That's what he talked about: sin, righteousness, judgment. All the prophets talked about that: sin, righteousness, judgment. "You're all sinning, you're violating God's righteousness, you are unrighteous, and judgment's coming."

Then came another prosecutor, the perfect prosecutor: the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Him – "remember at His baptism? – and empowered Him for ministry. And everywhere He went, He prosecuted sinners."

He went back to His own synagogue in Nazareth, in Luke 4, and He prosecuted them for their hypocrisy and false religion and said, "You're just like your fathers before you," and they tried to throw Him off a cliff and stone Him to death. He was everything an Old Testament prophet was. He was everything John the Baptist was, who was the greatest prophet, and far more. He was a prosecutor of sinners, and He rendered them guilty.

Just look for a bit back to John, chapter 3, and get a taste of the ministry of Jesus. I think most people think that when Jesus came into the world, it was sort of all hearts and flowers, and He was saying all kinds of flowery things and making people feel good. That is not true. He was God's prosecutor. He says in John 3:19, "This is judgment; Light has come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, doesn't come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." He indicts.

Chapter 5, verse 45: "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses," and by that, He means the Old Testament. "You set your hope in Moses. If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" Again, He indicts them. This was the pattern; I'm just giving you some illustrations.

Chapter 7, verse 7: "The world hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil." The world, again, is all the unregenerate. "They hate Me because I testify that its deeds are evil." Chapter 8, verse 34: "Truly, truly, I say to you –" our Lord says "– everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin, a slave of sin."

Down in verse 39: "They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you're Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you're seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.'" Jesus says, "You're not children of Abraham."

Go down to verse 44: "You're of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning. He doesn't stand in the truth because there's no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature. He's a liar and the father of lies. And because I speak the truth, you don't believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me?"

In chapter 9, again, it's the same kind of thing in verse

39 of chapter 9. "And Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind. For judgment I came into this world. For judgment I came into this world.' So the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, 'We're not blind too, are we?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, "We see," your sin remains.'" This was His ministry. It was just relentless indictments. He was God's prosecutor as God's perfect Prophet.

Chapter 15 will wrap up this thought there, verse 22: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin." Verse 24: "If I hadn't done among them the works which no one else did, they wouldn't have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well." And you can add Matthew 23 where there's this blistering diatribe against the rulers of Israel in which He calls them "whited sepulcher full of dead men's bones, sons of hell." And you can go to Luke 16 where He describes hell and how cut off from heaven and on the way to hell the leaders of Israel are.

The Old Testament prophets were God's prosecutors of sinners. John the Baptist was God's prosecutor of sinners. Jesus Christ was God's prosecutor of sinners. Do you see what our Lord is saying to the disciples? What He is saying is, "Look, from here on, the Holy Spirit is going to put the truth in your hands, the truth in your hands by which you will measure every man, and you will become God's prosecutors in this generation." They were the prosecutors that followed the Lord, and we are the prosecutors that follow them.

In John 8:46, Jesus really turned the tables. He said to the leaders of Israel who were prosecuting Him, calling Him a blasphemer, He said, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? You've tried to prosecute Me unsuccessfully. You've tried to prosecute Me unsuccessfully. Now I am become your prosecutor."

Do you remember that the very week we're talking about in John 16, He went over to the Mount of Olives, looked back at the temple and said, "Not one stone will be left on top of another. This thing is coming crashing down"? He is saying that the world prosecuted the prophets in the Old Testament. And what did the world do to the prophets? Jesus said they killed the prophets, didn't He; and they did. They killed them because they were the prosecutors of the world who prosecuted the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

And then came John the Baptist, and John the Baptist was God's next prophetic prosecutor, and they killed him because he spoke of sin and righteousness and judgment. And then came the pure Prophet of God, the perfect Son of God, the ultimate Prosecutor who prosecuted the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, and they killed Him. In each case, the prosecuted by the world became the prosecutors of the world. And what our Lord is saying to the disciples and to us is this: the world's going to prosecute you in every generation – they're doing it now. They're going to come against you, they're going to indict you, they're going to bring accusations against you; but the truth of the matter is you're going to turn and be God's prosecutors of the world, and you're going to prosecute them with a violation of the revelation of God contained in Holy Scripture that the Holy Spirit is giving you and has placed in your hands. It is now the disciples and all believers who come after them, though we are hated, unjustly persecuted, and killed.

We are prosecuted in the world's courts. The truth is we are God' prosecutors. The prophets prosecuted and were killed. John the Baptist prosecuted and was beheaded. Jesus prosecuted and was crucified; now it's our turn. Ten out of the eleven disciples – ten out of the eleven, with the exception of John as far as we know – were killed. So the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts. But this is not talking about the work that He does in the heart, this is talking about the work that we do, empowered by Him with the Scripture.

Our Lord Jesus was accused by the world of being of blasphemers and a lawbreaker and killed for it. John was accused of violating the rights of an earthly king and killed for it. And Christians are going to be killed and have been killed through all of human history. But the Holy Spirit gives us an offensive weapon. What is our offensive weapon? It's the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And we live to bring charges, indictments, evidence, and render a guilty verdict against the world. An incredible calling we have.

All gospel ministry starts here, right? Can't get to the good news until you've preached what? The bad news; and it's all through the preaching of revealed truth. That's why the following verses, "I have many more things to say to you, but you can't bear them now. But when the Spirit comes, He will speak – He will guide you into all the truth. The full revelation of God, as inscripturated in the New Testament, will be in your hands, eventually."

The Holy Spirit continues the work of the prophets, He continues the work of John the Baptist, He continues the work of Jesus, not only what He does through them, but what He does with them from the Scripture. The prophets, John the Baptist, and Jesus all measured people's behavior by the revelation of God; we do the same.

You know, this is at a time when it seems to me the church is trying to make the world feel good about itself, trying to find a way to make everybody feel like, "You're just fine, and God just wants to make them a little better." If you ever hear a preacher who is not a prosecutor, you're listening to someone who's shirked his duty. And what is the point of the gospel if there's no sin and judgment? All gospel ministry starts here. We are hated, we are indicted, we're convicted by the world, but we turn the tables. Yes, the Holy Spirit does the internal work of conviction, but He also uses the external Scripture.

It's the same as salvation, Romans 10, right? We know the Holy Spirit saves people – you're born again of the Spirit – but we also know that they can't be saved unless they hear, because faith comes by hearing the truth concerning Christ. So the Holy Spirit does the heart work, but not apart from the Word being preached.

Now, you've got to give me another five minutes because I have to tell you what's in this text. So here's the trio; here's how we have to give the gospel. First of all, we find in the Scripture everything we need to know concerning sin. But it's one particular sin that we have to proclaim. What sin? "The sin of not believing in Me."

I know it's real popular today to measure people against the Ten Commandments; that's not what this is talking about. Everyone has a general sense of morality, everybody has a general sense of sinfulness and breaking the rules, but everybody tends to think that even in spite of breaking the rules, they're good enough, they're good enough. So here is the sin that sends people to hell: not

believing in Jesus Christ; that's what sends people to hell; not acknowledging Him as Lord, Savior, God.

"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. If you don't believe in Me – " John 3:18 " – you'll perish. Whoever believes not shall perish." John 5 says, "You don't believe in Me." John 8, "You don't believe in Me." John 15, "You don't believe in Me." That's the damning sin.

To talk about sins in general never gets to the point because people will inevitably think that they're good deeds – which they think are good deeds – outweighs the sin. So you have to rush to the simple reality, "Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as God and Lord and Savior?" because the rest doesn't matter. All other religion that's outside of Christ, all other christs, all other views of Christ, all views of morality, all compassion, all good works mean zero if you reject Christ.

And then we have to preach righteousness, we have to preach righteousness. Well, how do we preach that? "Righteousness because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me."

What is that saying? Let me tell you what it's saying. Most people think, "If there is a God, if there is a heaven, I'm good enough to go there, I'm good enough to go there." We've already said no, if you don't believe in Christ you're not going to go there.

But, secondly, here's why you're not going to go there. There's only one person who ever walked on this earth who had a right at the end of His life to go directly on His own merit into the presence of God, only one. So unless you possess the righteousness of Jesus Christ, you will never see God; that's the point. The righteousness that is demonstrated, "Because I go to My Father and you see Me no more." In other words, God highly exalted Him, lifted Him to glory, sat Him at His right hand, and gave Him the name Lord, the name that's above every name.

The divine message of Scripture is this: the sin that damns you is rejecting Jesus Christ. The righteousness that saves you is the righteousness that belonged only to Christ. The divine message is this: there is absolutely no righteousness in any human being that can ever bring that human being into the presence of God. If you're ever going into the presence of God, you have to possess the righteousness that Jesus Christ possessed.

That, by the way, is the gospel. When you believe in Christ, He gives you His righteousness, He covers you. You become the righteousness of God in Him; that's the gospel. Our righteousness is filthy rags. Our righteousness will damn us. But there's one whose righteousness allowed Him to disappear and go into the presence of God. The only way you'll ever get to God, or I'll ever get there, is to be granted His righteousness, His holiness.

And dear friends, that is the amazing doctrine of imputed righteousness that is the heart of the gospel. When you believe in Christ, He gives you His righteousness, because on the cross, He took your sinfulness. The only way you'll ever get to heaven is to be perfectly holy. Your righteousness has to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees; you have to be holy like your Father in heaven is holy. You can't be on your own, and so it has to be something granted to you, a righteousness that is alien to you.

And that's what Paul gave in his testimony in Philippians 3. He went about, like all the Jews, trying to

establish his own righteousness. Then he saw it was absolute rubbish, and he believed in Christ, and God imputed the believing sinner the very righteousness of His Son. That's the gospel. And then – and that, of course, all the details of that are laid out in the Holy Spirit's revealed revelation, Scripture. So as we go forth with the Scripture, from the Scripture, we preach sin, the sin that damns, not believing in Christ. We preach righteousness. The only righteousness acceptable to God is the righteousness of Christ. And we can preach from the revealed testimony of Holy Scripture, given by the Holy Spirit, that that righteousness can be imputed to a sinner who puts his trust in Him. And then we preach judgment.

What judgment? How do we prove judgment? How do we prove judgment? We preach judgment – here's the proof – because the ruler of this world has been judged. Scripture tells us that Satan's been judged. The ruler of this world is Satan. There are lots of scriptures – I won't take more time because I'm already way over – lots of Scriptures that talk about Satan being judged. Genesis 3:15, "His head is crushed." Colossians 2, "The powers of Satan and hell are all defeated at the cross." Hebrews, chapter 2, "The one who had the power of death is destroyed by Christ." You can go to Revelation 20 where Satan is bound, and then he is cast into the lake of fire with all the demons forever and ever.

Here's the argument: if God has overpowered and judged the most powerful, evil force in the universe, you're not going to escape. It's an argument from the greater to the lesser. I can prove to you from the Scripture that your sin will damn you, because the Scripture says if you don't believe in Christ, you're damned. I can prove to you that the righteousness you need to go to God is the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and if you don't have His righteousness imputed to you, you will never be accepted to God. And I can prove to you that to reject Christ and His righteousness is to lead to judgment, and you will never escape because even the greatest force of evil, which is Satan and his demons, supernatural beings, can't escape the judgment of God. You have no chance. This is how we're supposed to preach the gospel: sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Okay, Acts 2, quick, Acts 2. You're going to get a special reward in heaven for this morning. Acts 2: first sermon preached by an apostle. Here we are on the Day of Pentecost, first sermon. Do you think Peter was listening that day? Here's the first sermon. Here's how he preaches the gospel:

"Men of Israel – " verse 22 " – listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know, this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." Peter is a prosecutor on the Day of Pentecost. He is a prosecutor with an indictment, accusations, proof, and a conviction: sin, the sin of rejecting Christ.

Then notice the second thing, verse 24: "But God raised Him up, putting an end to the agony of death." And then he quotes from the Psalms. Then go all the way down to verse 32: "And God raised Him up again and – " verse 33 " – exalted Him to the right hand of God." That's righteousness, right, because Christ was exalted to the right hand of God. Christ was taken into glory, the only holy man, the only holy man. It is that righteousness that God accepts, and that alone. And unless you have that righteousness imputed to you, you have no hope.

And finally Peter preached judgment, verse 34: "It wasn't David who ascended into heaven, but he himself said: The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for

Your feet.” God is going to crush the enemies of Christ. “Therefore, let all the house of Israel know that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.” You say, “Wow, if you preach that kind of message, people are going to run.” Really?

Look at the rest of the story: “When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart,” that’s the work of the Holy Spirit inside. That’s the work of the Holy Spirit inside. “They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘What do we do? What do we do?’” You remember the answer. And verse 40: “With many other words, he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’”

More judgment. “So then those who received his word were baptized; and that day there were added – ” how many? “ – three thousand souls.” And that was the church. “And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.” You get the Holy Spirit’s results when you preach the Holy Spirit’s message, okay. All right that’s enough. Let’s bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You that You have turned the tables on the world, and the world that prosecutes us will be prosecuted by us using the revelation revealed by the Holy Spirit. We thank You for the evidence of what happened on the Day of Pentecost when the apostles did what the Lord instructed them to do, how the church was born, and thousands, upon thousands, upon thousands were added as the days went on. Use us, Lord, to build Your church, to grow Your church. Accomplish Your will through us, we pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2018 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).