

# The Spirit Brings Men to Christ

John 16:1-12

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**Introduction:** What Jesus taught His disciples is about one million light years from what the majority of Christians are taught and believe today. Vast numbers of believers are entirely persuaded that God's will is always good health and wealth. Sickness or financial setbacks are evidence of lack of faith and proper thinking.

But they are not alone. The rest often practice a watered down version of their philosophy of life. Most believe that if they do everything God wants them to do....toe the line....keep the rules....that God will always bless them with the blessings they desire from him. Try this test on yourself..."Do you believe God will help you with difficult things in life if you are more obedient, read your Bible enough and go to church enough? Do you think you are on your own in a trial if you have been sinning, yelling at your family and just generally angry at God and the world? If you think God's help and blessing is earned by faithfulness or obedience then you have not swallowed the Prosperity Gospel, but you are nibbling around the edges.

Jesus knew that all men think this way. In our generation it has been taken to incredible extremes. Much of the church in Africa practices Christian rituals in the hope that it will bring them money and health. It is the default human way of interacting with God. When men come to Christ with this kind of thinking and run into many of the same obstacles and trials that other humans face, Satan is always there to accuse them [we did not try hard enough or believe strongly enough] If that does not work then Satan will accuse God. [You did your part and God did not do His.

But did God ever promise wealth, prosperity and smooth sailing? The answer is.... "He actually told them that we would live in a world fraught with difficulties and hardship." It is a world full of emotionally and spiritually broken people. Our institutions are broken because the humans who found and run them are as well. You can't build a good community with broken individuals. Sin has permeated every area of our world. God did not want the 11 disciples to think it was suddenly going to change for them now that they were followers of Christ. For the Believer there is this additional difficulty.... The world does not like God or His children. This is what He said to them....

**John 16:1-12** "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. <sup>2</sup> "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. <sup>3</sup> "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. <sup>4</sup> "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup> "But now I

am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' <sup>6</sup> "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup> "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. <sup>8</sup> "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup> and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; <sup>11</sup> and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. <sup>12</sup> "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.

If we persist in believing that life is supposed to be smooth sailing after salvation we will stumble. Jesus is deeply concerned about His children. He left behind His instruction and encouragement for us to read and take to heart. If you know how things are supposed to be in your life you will not be upset, discouraged and disillusioned when they actually happen.

I want you to understand the two things that Jesus did here to keep you from stumbling in your Christian life. **The first thing** He did was tell you the truth about the world that you are living in. That world is not going to be changed until Christ overthrows it in Tribulation.

Until then we are the ambassadors of Christ in this foreign land. You are not on your own as an ambassador. You speak for and represent the leader of your country. When **we** speak and live, it is not Christianity or religion we are representing. It is Christ Himself and He is the God of Creation. He changes men from the inside out and never from the outside in. He is a miracle worker and life giver and on the cross He took the sin that was yours and gave you a righteousness that is His. This is who we represent. We are not the poster children for perfect, sinless lives. We are the ambassadors for a Savior who saves sinners apart from their works and religion.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-21** <sup>17</sup> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. <sup>18</sup> Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Ambassadors are not citizens in the country where they reside. But they serve a very important role there. Their citizenship is elsewhere and that is where they look for help, support and strength.

**Philippians 3:20** <sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

**The second thing** Jesus told us is that He has sent the marines to guard the Consulate in the foreign land where we reside. We have already learned that the Holy Spirit will Himself testify of Christ to the world. The Spirit will reveal the true Christ to men.

**John 15:26** <sup>26</sup> "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

Now Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will also reveal men to themselves. Two things must happen for men to be reconciled to God. They must see Christ in His perfections and beauty and they must see themselves in His light. Making that happen is an impossible task for broken people like us. So Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will accomplish both of those things through us. Let's look at the details of it together.

**These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling [1]:** Stumbling is a Greek word that we actually get scandal from. "So that you will not be scandalized...shocked, outraged, appalled or offended when you come to find out that life will not be easy. Have you ever known someone who became very mad at God because of the turns their lives took? They stumbled, because they did not know they were picking their way through the minefield known as life on this Earth.

The Cross makes it clear that God loves you, has saved you, will give you peace and joy and many, many blessings, but it was never His intention to take us out of this fallen world, but to leave us in it as testimony to how He saves and loves sinners. If you don't know this or don't believe it you will stumble over reality when it strikes.

**"They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God [2]:** This of course applied specifically to these Jewish men who were now going to testify that the Messiah of Judaism has come. Those in power did not want God to send His Son and resented and murdered Him when He appeared. This was a hard sell to the Jewish Religious Rulers. BUT.....Three thousand others believes when Peter preached the first Christian sermon on Pentecost.

**"These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me [3]:** The men who persecuted the disciples did it in the name of religion while knowing neither God the Father or God the Son. Their ignorance explains their behavior but it does not excuse it. Romans one tells us that men know enough about God to know that they do not want to know Him. God says that makes them without excuse in the judgment.

**2 Thessalonians 1:6-9** <sup>6</sup> For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup> and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup> dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

**"But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them [4a]:** Health and Wealth preaching leaves men and

women twisting in the wind. When the inevitable trials and oppositions of this life come they have only two explanations....THEY HAVE FAILED TO BE FAITHFUL ENOUGH TO GOD. They need to try harder, believe harder, give more money. Or...God is NOT faithful and cannot be trusted. Jesus tells us the realities of this world we live in so that we will not stumble and fall on our faces when it opposes us.

**These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going? [4b-5]:** You did not need to know these things before now. I have been with you. When you were hungry in the wilderness I was there to feed you. When you were on that lake in the storm I was sleeping in the transom and I saved you. You have already experienced the truth of what I am saying only....I was physically with you.

**But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart [6]:** But now....I am going away. I keep telling you but you are acting as if I never said it. You are hoping that by pretending it will not happen....BUT it is going to happen. I know that you are overcome with sorrow to the point of not even being able to speak about it.

**But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away [7a]:** It will actually be better for you if I go away. This is the kind of statement that is so unbelievable that it needs some explaining and it needs it right away.

**For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you [7b]:** As long as Christ is in the world the Holy Spirit will not be. Now the Spirit is God and is therefore universally present. We call that omnipresent. But the Spirit was not actively doing any of these things until Jesus returned to heaven. When Jesus left the Holy Spirit stepped in to fill that void and it was a huge void. Only God the Spirit could fill the shoes of God the Son. They are Co-Eternal. They Co-Created the world.

**But if I go, I will send Him to you [7c]:** This means "when I go I will send Him to you." Like Creation and Redemption and even resurrection the Father and Son act together. The Father also sends the Spirit Jesus said...

**John 14:16** <sup>16</sup> "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

What Jesus said God would send was another Helper like Him. Just like Him. Able to do what Christ could do. The Spirit's presence was more advantageous because unlike Jesus, who was bound to the tiny space of Israel for only a few years....The Spirit will be with us forever and is active in every language, tribe and nation of the world. WOW! When men go to preach in New Guinea or Africa among cannibals and heathen....the Holy Spirit is there.

When we go into Juvenile hall or share a Scripture or tell the gospel to a friend, neighbor co-worker or stranger...The Holy Spirit is there.

**And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment [8]:** What does the Holy Spirit do here with regard to the Gospel? He

convicts. The word convict means to convince. This is the one thing we can never ever do. I have many years of education in Bible and Theology and I can convince exactly no one with my knowledge.

Remember the two things that I said had to be true for a man to come to Christ? **They must see Christ in His perfections and beauty** and **they must see themselves in His light.** These are exactly the things that The Holy Spirit does in the world. ONLY...Jesus adds one more. The Spirit will also convince men that the sin and wickedness of Satan and this world are already judged and condemned by God. It is just a matter of time until the sentence is carried out on Satan and all who stand with him and against God's Son.

Paul knew that the Holy Spirit would have to do this work even though he himself did have a part to play in it. This is the great apostle speaking now....These words ring true for you as well.

**1 Corinthians 2:3-5** <sup>3</sup> I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

The world does not understand the Gospel of Christ or the love of Christ. Believers do not have the means to make them understand it. We can only state it as clearly as the Holy Spirit has caused us to understand it. The Spirit takes it from there. I was entirely alone with God when I was converted. When men do believe....when you believed....that was a work of the Holy Spirit. Paul went on to say...

**1 Corinthians 2:6-8** <sup>6</sup> Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; <sup>7</sup> ..... <sup>8</sup> *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

Why would any sane man kill His God who came to save him and love him and take him to heaven? Why indeed? Because they did not and still do not understand. Even Paul, the Bible scholar and religious leader did not understand the truths of the gospel of Christ....He said.....

**1 Corinthians 2:10-11** <sup>10</sup> For to us God revealed *them* **through the Spirit**; for **the Spirit searches all things**, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

If you want to know what God thinks then the Spirit will have to reveal that to you through the Scripture. In fact it was the Holy Spirit who wrote the Scripture.

**1 Corinthians 2:12-13** <sup>12</sup> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, <sup>13</sup> which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

So let's look at the things that the Holy Spirit convinces unbelievers of.

**Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me [9]:** Men are hopelessly lost in sin and yet if you tell them this most scoff. Anyone knows or can think of someone infinitely worse than they are. There are degrees of guilt in any sin. There are those who lie some and those who are pathological liars. They lie when the truth will do just as well or better.

You can show any person that they have broken the commandments of God, but only the Holy Spirit can convince them of the gravity of their standing before the holy and righteous God of the universe....their personal guilt for sin and their refusal to believe in Jesus as the sole remedy for it. The disciples had absolutely no chance of being able to do this. They were living in one of the most religious and self-righteous cultures in the entire history of mankind and yet....As Peter preached on that first day and hour when the Holy Spirit came into the world Luke it was a veritable avalanche of repentance from sin.

**Acts 2:32-38** <sup>32</sup> "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. <sup>33</sup> "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. <sup>34</sup> "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, <sup>35</sup> UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'" <sup>36</sup> "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified." <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How could the man....the very man who denied Christ three times just 50 days ago stand up and preach with this kind of result? Simple....The Holy Spirit convicted his hearers of the sin of rejecting and distrusting Jesus Christ for salvation.

**Concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me [10]:** Just as men need to see themselves as hopeless sinners to be saved they must also see the Perfectly righteous Savior as the only remedy for their condition. If Jesus is not perfectly righteous...He cannot die for our sins. He must die for His own sin....for all have sinned and the wages of sin is death.

The Holy Spirit convinces men that their only righteousness is what Jesus graciously gave them when they trusted Him.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** <sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

We are convinced by the Holy Spirit that our own nature and behavior condemn us, and are equally and joyously convinced that Christ very nature and behavior will justify us

and give us a righteous standing before the Judge of the universe. Paul said that this righteous and sinless Savior was declared to be so by the resurrection from the dead.

**Romans 1:1-4** Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of righteousness because Christ went to the Father.

**Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged [11]:** Who is that ruler? None other than Satan. And how was he judged? At the Cross. Satan tempted men to sin knowing that they would die. How did he know. He believed God when God told Adam and Eve it was so.

**Genesis 2:16-17** <sup>16</sup> The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; <sup>17</sup> but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

**Genesis 3:1-4** Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" <sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; <sup>3</sup> but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" <sup>4</sup> The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

From that time on Satan was the ruler of death. He held it over every generation of mankind. The very thing Satan himself caused he used again and again to accuse us before God, to ourselves and to one another. Guilty, guilty, guilty and worthy of eternal death in hell. Our fallen humanity was held in the grip of death like a small rabbit in a lions jaws. BUT...God the Son became a human man and broke the back of death by paying the penalty for sin.

**Hebrews 2:14-16** <sup>14</sup> Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. <sup>16</sup> For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

The penalty for sin is death, but now it is paid and you may live. Who would believe such a thing? The man or woman whom the Holy Spirit convinces...that's who!

## CONCLUSION

The world is broken and so are the people in it. The gospel of grace is nonsense to the world. It makes no sense because they do not think they are that bad and they have no

idea that Christ is that perfect. They see themselves only in the light of other people. We can all make ourselves look good by finding someone who is worse than we are.

The religious have even less use for the gospel message that all men are unable to pay their debt to God and that Jesus Christ will pay it for them. That their righteousness is unacceptable to God, but Christ's righteousness is completely acceptable to Him. That salvation is un-earnable in any way, but that Christ will give it to you for free in exchange for your full trust in His sinless sacrifice on your behalf.

Jesus warns us so that when we discover that men do not receive our message and even dislike us actively because we have given our lives to Christ we will not stumble. This is the normal human response to the Grace of God.

BUT....God has armed us with divine help. The Holy Spirit will act powerfully to do what we followers of Jesus could never do. He has called us to live in this world and to therefore be a testimony to His grace. We are unable to persuade men but the Holy Spirit is powerful to convince any that God calls to salvation. We have the Spirit to comfort us in trials. He wrote the Scripture for us and teaches it to us so that we will understand. He is a treasured gift from the Father and The Savior. He lives in you forever.

How should you respond to this knowledge? With hope and joy! God has left us in this world to serve Him by loving and serving one another and by testifying to the love, grace and sacrifice of Jesus our Lord. We can do this, because the Holy Spirit testifies of Christ and cares for each of us. You are not alone to do the impossible. You and I are tools in the Master's hands to accomplish the will of God in the world. Trust Him to work in you and through your circumstances. Be at peace in the world.

**Romans 8:11-18** <sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. <sup>12</sup> So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- <sup>13</sup> for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. <sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.