

**16:4(b)". . . These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.**

**16:5 But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'**

**16:6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.**

**16:7 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."**

In John 15:7-16:4 Jesus told the disciples that they would be persecuted and hated by the world because the world hates Him and does not know the Father whom He revealed. Until now, Jesus had been with the disciples and had personally provided protection to them and absorbed any opposition Himself so He did not need to speak about facing persecution any earlier than this (16:4b). But soon He would leave them, and they would be forced to face the opposition without Him (16:5).

Although formerly the disciples *had* asked Jesus where He was going (Jn. 13:36), they were so absorbed with the thought of losing Him that their question was more a protest than actual concern over Jesus' destination (Carson, 533). Thus, Jesus said, "Now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'" (16:5).

The disciples' grief was undeniable (16:6), but they needed to believe that Jesus' departure was going to be for their benefit (Jn. 14:1-3, 27; 16:7). If Jesus did *not* depart, the Helper would *not* come.

There were no physical limitations that prevented the Holy Spirit from coming while Jesus was with the disciples, but there was an order to God's plan. He would not send the Spirit until Jesus had died and ascended into heaven. The good of the disciples is part of the larger plan of God; as God's plan advances, it is good for everyone.

**16:8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;**

**16:9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;**

**16:10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;**

**16:11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged."**

Verses 8-11 are an expansion of verse 7. Jesus said He would send the Holy Spirit and His coming would be to the believer's advantage. Verse 8 tells what the Holy Spirit would do when He comes and the advantage His coming would make.

The Greek word translated as "convict" has a broad range of meaning, but in the NT it means "to show someone his sin and to summon him to repentance" (TDNT, II, 474). This could be a matter between two people (Matt. 18:15; Eph. 5:11), a church affair (I Tim. 5:20; II Tim. 4:2); Titus 1:9, 13: 2:15), or in this case, God's direct interaction with the sinner. Its meaning is found in John 3:20 where it is said that a person hates the light and avoids it "lest his evil deeds *be exposed*." In John 8:46 Jesus asks His opponents, "Which one of you *convicts* me of sin?" That is, which of you can demonstrate that I am a

sinner? Perhaps “convict” would better be translated as “expose” in the sense of “to disclose or unmask.”

The Spirit’s work of exposing applies in three realms: sin, righteousness, and judgment. “The causes assigned do not seem relevant at first. Why would men be convicted of sin because of unbelief rather than because of some concrete offense, such as murder, theft, or adultery? What has Christ’s return to the Father have to do with personal righteousness? How can the judgment of an invisible person, whose very existence is dubious to many, be regarded as proof of judgment? The points of connection seem far-fetched. The causes, however, are not so vague as they seem” (Tenney, 235-236).

Although there are a number of interpretations for verses 8-11, the most plausible to me is the view which sees Jesus’ comments in 16:8-11 connected to His impending trial and crucifixion. The world had already conducted its trial against Jesus; Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy against God, and sentenced to death even before He was given a trial (Jn. 5:18; 7:1; 8:58-59; 11:53). The Jews’ desire to kill Jesus would come to fruition soon (John 18-20); His trial would be a mockery of justice, conducted strictly for the sake of appearances. “Significantly, the accounts of the trial of Jesus, alike in the fourth gospel as in the Synoptics, are written to show that in reality *Jesus* was the innocent one and the ‘world’ was condemned by its action. The task of the Paraclete [the Holy Spirit] is to expose the reality of this situation, and the trial before the Sanhedrin and Pilate’s judgment hall in Jerusalem gives place to the tribunal of God in heaven. The Paraclete, through the witness of the disciples of Jesus in the gospel and its exemplification in the church, unveils to the world the real nature of sin and righteousness and judgment in the light of what God was doing in Jesus, and its implications for men and women. The elements of this exposure are itemized in verses 9-11” (Beasley-Murray, 281).

In other words, the Holy Spirit, when He comes, functions as the prosecuting attorney in the trial of the world before God. He will expose the guilt of the world’s false views about sin, righteousness, and judgment - specifically in relation to Jesus’ crucifixion.

First, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of their sin because it does not believe in Jesus. Unbelief in Jesus is the primary sin against God found in the gospel of John (Jn. 1:11; 3:18, 19; 5:38, 46; 6:29, 35, 36; 8:24, 45, 46; 10:25, 37, 38; 11:25, 26, 42, 48; 12:36, 39, 44; 13:19; 14:1, 2, 11, 29; 15:22; 17:20, 21; 19:35; 20:31). It is more than just ignorance; it entails rejection of what God has revealed in Christ. John 1:10-11 says that Jesus came to His own but they did not receive Him. Throughout the gospel Jesus revealed the Father through His words and works, but men were not able to accept His teaching (Jn. 6:60); they could not understand what He was saying (Jn. 8:43), nor could they believe in Him (Jn. 12:39). Unbelief is what caused men to send Jesus to the cross.

Although sin is not limited to unbelief, unbelief in Christ ensures that the world will remain in death. If the world believed in Jesus, they would also believe what He said about their sin and repent. Thus, the Holy Spirit’s primary work in relation to the world is to convict them of their sin of unbelief in Christ (Morris, 698; Beasley-Murray, 281).

Secondly, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of righteousness. Righteousness basically means “to make right” or “to conform to a standard or a norm.” It is meeting the requirement of the law which places man in a right standing with God. In the book of John, the apostle interprets all righteousness in relation to Christ. In John 16:10 it is related to His resurrection and ascension (I go to the Father) which declares His righteousness (TDNT, II, 200).

While Jesus was on the earth, He lived a righteous life; He perfectly conformed to the will of God in every respect. In John 5:19 Jesus said, “the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.” Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus “has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” His life also exposed man’s false righteousness. In John 7:24 the Jews had concluded that Jesus’ work on the Sabbath was breaking the law; Jesus said they came to their conclusions superficially and admonished them not to “judge according to appearance, but judge with *righteous* judgment.”

Man’s superficial perception of righteousness is most blatant at the cross. Throughout Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, the Jewish leaders saw themselves as acting on behalf of God. In the world’s eyes, Jesus’ death was viewed as a righteous condemnation of a sinner. But it is through the cross that the world’s righteousness will be exposed as unrighteousness, for Christ was accepted by the Father and vindicated by His resurrection and ascension (“because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me”). In Acts 2:22-36 Peter says to his Jewish audience, “Men of Israel, 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, just 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. **But God raised Him up again . . . having been exalted to the right hand of God.** Therefore let all the house of Israel **know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified.**” In other words, Jesus’ return to the Father acts as the stamp of divine approval that unmasks the error of the world’s skewed sense of righteousness.

Lastly, the Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning judgment. Jesus foresaw in John 12:31 Satan’s defeat: “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out,” but the world concluded that anyone who hung on a cross was cursed by God (Gal. 3:13). But the vindication of Christ by the resurrection was at the same time God’s rejection of the prince of this world. It was through the cross that Satan was defeated. While the world was executing judgment on Jesus, God was judging Satan.

Men cannot believe in Christ or accept these evidences intuitively. Therefore, it was necessary that redemption not only be acquired, but also be applied. Men, if left to themselves, would have remained in their sins, and Christ’s death would have been in vain. Without the Spirit’s work, the disciples’ testimony about Christ would fall on deaf ears. They would be persecuted (Jn. 15:7-16:4), but bear no fruit from their efforts. Thus, God would not be glorified (Jn. 15:7-8). “The great blessing which the prophets predicted as characteristic of the Messianic period, was the effusion of the Holy Spirit” (Hodge, Systematic Theology, II, 635).

**16:12 "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.**

**16:13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."**

Verses 12 -13 move from the work of the Spirit in the world to His work among believers. Jesus had many more things to tell the disciples, but He could not tell them for their experience at this point of time limited their ability to perceive. However, the Spirit would lead them in the truth.

Just as Jesus didn't speak of His own initiative, neither does the Spirit – a point that will be expanded upon in verses 14 and 15.

"In passing we should notice that the attempt of some scholars to 'go back to the original Jesus' and bypass the teaching of the apostles is shown by the Lord Himself to be misguided. The same source lies behind both. The Spirit's teaching is not of Himself, but He 'teaches what things whatsoever He shall hear'" (Morris, 700).

**16:14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you."**

How can we tell if the Spirit is at work? Is it because there will be a flurry of signs, wonders, and miracles? Will we know the Spirit's presence by His great displays of power? According to verse 14, the presence of the Spirit is known when the glory of Christ is seen. The work of the Spirit is Christ-centered; He draws attention to Christ, not Himself. When people see Jesus as glorious, the Spirit of God is with them.

Verse 15 elaborates on this.

**16:15 "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you."**

Though the Spirit takes what is Christ's, that does not mean that He does so to the exclusion of the Father. There is no division within the Godhead. The Son reveals the Father; therefore, when the Spirit reveals the Son He is revealing the Father as well.

The rest of the chapter takes a slight detour as Jesus deals with certain difficulties felt by the disciples (Morris, 701-702; Carson, 542).

Before we move on it may be good to summarize this section. Carson summarizes verses 12-16 well. I quote him at length:

In John 16:8-11, the Counselor convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. He does so because Jesus is returning to the Father and no longer exercises the role of convicting people Himself.

If the Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus in 15:26-27 and brings conviction to people by continuing the work of Jesus in 16:8-11, in 16:12-15 He brings glory to Jesus by unpacking Christ to those who attended the Last Supper (the “you” in v. 12 cannot easily be taken in any other way, and controls the other instances of “you” in the rest of the paragraph; cf. also 14:26). As Jesus is not independent of His Father, but speaks only what the Father gives Him to say (5:16-30), so the Spirit is not independent of the Father and the Son. “He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears” (16:13). His focus is Jesus: “He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (16:14). And of course, even here what belongs to Jesus comes from the Father. “All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you” (16:15).

The reason why Jesus Himself has not unpacked everything about Himself and His mission to the disciples is that they are not ready to bear it (16:12). Even this late in their discipleship, they cannot quite integrate in their own minds the notion of a King-Messiah and the notion of a Suffering Messiah. Until that point is firmly nailed down, the way they read their Scriptures – what we call the Old Testament – will be so skewed by political and royal aspirations that they are not going to get it right.

How much of the Spirit’s work focuses on Jesus Christ – bearing witness to Him, continuing certain aspects of His ministry, unpacking His significance! (Carson, For the Love of God, vol 2, May 26).

**16:16 "A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.**

**16:17 Some of His disciples then said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father '?"**

**16:18 So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while '? We do not know what He is talking about."**

**16:19 Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"**

The disciples had no understanding that the Messiah would die and rise from the dead so they were confused about what He meant when He said, “a little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me”; and, ‘because I go to the Father. ’”

Jesus was aware of their confusion and in verse 16 repeats the thought (Jn. 16:19) before He offers clarification.

**16:20 "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.**

**16:21 Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world."**

The disciples for the moment were grieving over Jesus' departure, but their grief would be turned to joy in the same way that labor pains give way to the joy when the baby is born.

From the historical perspective of John 16, Jesus had not yet died. He would die "in a little while." At that time, there will be weeping and lamenting and fear in the disciples while the world rejoices. But Jesus says to look at it like a birth. "In a little while" the pain and the loss are past and there is great joy.

In the OT labor is a common way of expressing the suffering of God's people before the joy of the messianic salvation is experienced (Isa. 21:2-3; 26:16-21; 66:7-14; Jer. 13:21; Mic. 4:9-10).

**16:22 "Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you."**

It is important to see that the source of the disciples' joy is the presence of Jesus. Jesus said, "I will see you again and your heart will rejoice." Because joy comes from being with Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus means that *Jesus* will never die again, He can say "No one will take your joy from you." In addition, the resurrection of Jesus means that *you* will never die. These two things need to be true if your joy is never to be taken from you: both the source of your joy must last forever and you must last forever. If either you or the source of your joy is mortal, your joy will be taken from you. Since God is sovereign, in the end He guarantees the triumph of your joy forever.

**16:23 "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.**

**16:24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."**

In the day when the disciples rejoice, they will understand clearly what has taken place and will have all of their questions answered. "Easter will be a shaft of light from heaven on the way of Jesus, and the Spirit will be their leader into all truth" (Beasley-Murray, 285). They will also enjoy answers to their prayers in Jesus' name (for a helpful comparison of the verses related to prayer in John, see Brown, vol.2, 634-636).

In John 14:13 Jesus connects our praying with the glory of God, and with his own role as the Mediator between God and us. He says, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, *so that* the Father may be glorified in the Son." Jesus answers prayer in order to bring glory to God.

In John 15:7–8 He says, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." This prayer is conditional – "if we abide in Christ," that is, united to Him by faith, and if we are saturated with the word of Christ and are in tune with God's will, our prayers are heard when we pray. Praying in Jesus' name is a similar idea. When we pray in Jesus' name we are praying based on our union with Him and because Jesus is in union with the Father, there is no doubt that our prayers will be answered. Thus "praying in Jesus' name" continues the motif of the union of the Vine and the branches in John 15. The answered prayers of 15:7 are prayers that mainly have to do with fruit bearing that brings glory to God.

Now in John 16: 23-24 Jesus tells us, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full." Here we're to ask in Jesus' name "that your joy may be full."

How does praying with the goal of glorifying God and God answering our prayers with the intent of bringing us joy fit together? "They fit together because if we find our joy in seeing God's glory and in the manifestation of that glory for others to see, then when He is glorified, we will be glad. And when we are glad in His glory, He is glorified all the more" (Piper Sermon Jn. 16). Prayer produces fullness of joy because prayer provides the power to bear fruit that brings glory to God. Prayer gives us the ability to do what we love to do, but can't do without God's help. In other words, the Bible plainly teaches that the goal of all we do should be to glorify God. But it also teaches us that in doing so we will experience the fullness of our joy. Finding joy in glorifying God brings Him greater glory than if we serve Him out of obligation. As John Piper says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. Therefore, since glorifying God is the main goal of the universe and your life, be relentless and unwavering in fighting for joy in God. This is your lifelong vocation" (Piper Sermon, Jn. 16).

As D.A. Carson points out in both John 15 and 16, joy is linked with something else. Joy is not an independent gift unrelated to other aspects of a believer's life. What this means in a practical way is that the believer is deluded if he expects to have joy regardless of his relationship with Christ. We may also look at it in another way, and ask what things tend to foster personal joy. Our spiritual health may be assessed by our answer. If we find joy in Christ and in prayer and in walking in the truth, we are modeling what Jesus was speaking of (Carson, Farewell Discourse, 165). Later in John's life he said, "It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." (III Jn. 3, 4).

***16:25 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father."***

Jesus admits that He had been speaking rather cryptically (figurative language means "veiled speech," not "with figures of speech"). But as verses 26 and 27 clarify, the day is coming when they will understand clearly what He has already told them.

***16:26 "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf;***

***16:27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father."***

Lest the disciples conclude that Jesus has interest in the disciples but the Father doesn't, He tells them that the Father loves them as well. In "that day," that is, in the day after His death and resurrection, mankind will be in a new relationship with God. Through the death of Christ there will be open access to the Father. Thus, Jesus is not saying that we should pray to Him and He will ask the Father to answer our request, but He is saying when we ask things based on our union with Him and the effects wrought by His death on the cross, we ask based on that new privileged standing that we have before God who hears our prayers.

***16:28 "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."***

***16:29 His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech.***

***16:30 Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God."***

In verse 18 the disciples were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while '? We do not know what He is talking about." In verse 19 John tells us that Jesus knew that they wanted to ask this question. Then in verses 20-28 Jesus addresses their concerns. In verse 28 He repeats "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."

This time the disciples think they understand: "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God"(Jn. 16:30). But they claim to know more than they actually know. They believe that Jesus is from God because He doesn't need to have anyone ask Him questions. That is, Jesus was able to discern what they were thinking and addresses them before anything was actually said (Jn. 16:18, 19ff.) This has been a pattern throughout the gospel (Jn. 1:47-50; 4:19, 29). In a way it's good that the disciples have seen this, but they are still far from understanding who Jesus is and the content of what He has been saying.

The inadequacy of their belief is revealed in Jesus' next words.

**16:31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?"**

**16:32 Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."**

The prediction of the scattering of the disciples will become the proof that the disciples did not understand what Jesus was saying. Jesus had told them He was leaving to be with the Father. He had told them that He could not reveal everything about Himself and His mission to them because they were not ready to bear it (16:12). But they thought their understanding was far more mature and sophisticated than it really was.

In one sense, the experience of the disciples was completely unique to them. Their failure to understand was based on numerous misconceptions that would change after Jesus rose from the dead. In another sense, the passage is very relevant to us for we often duplicate the same weaknesses. The encouragement is that God changed them.

"This very poor beginning serves to remind us that Christianity owes its genesis not to the apostles but to Christ; and this lesson must be learned afresh in every generation.' C.H. Dodd comments insightfully: 'It is part of the character and genius of the church that its foundation members were discredited men; it owed its existence not to their faith, courage, or virtue, but to what Christ had done with them; and this they could never forget.' Leon Morris adds, 'The church depends ultimately upon what God has done in Christ, not on the courage and wit of its first members.'" (Carson, Farewell Discourse, 168)

**16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."**

Why has Jesus told His disciples all of this? "I have told you these things," He says, "so that you might have peace."

The peace Jesus promises comes from a number of angles. First, because Jesus has told of His death, the disciples will eventually recognize that Jesus is in control. Once that happens all the things that Jesus had told them will come to light and their faith will grow and deepen and their peace will increase. Even His predicting their desertion (16:32) will cause them to recognize their own weaknesses and learn to abide in Christ (Jn. 15).

The Farewell Discourse of Jesus has come full circle. In John 14:1 Jesus said, "Do not let your heart be troubled; *believe in God, believe also in Me.*" Now we read, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; *I have overcome the world.*" From the beginning to the end the focus has been on Jesus. He encourages the believer to be of good cheer because of His victory.

“It is most important that believers develop the right perspective. The world seen from the perspective of Jesus’ cross/resurrection/exaltation appears to be a very different place from the one we picture without the advantage of this perspective” (Carson, Farewell Discourse, 170).

- Apart from the cross, the world just appears evil; from the perspective of the cross, it is the world that God loved and the Lamb of God died for.
- Prior to the cross, the world is seen as a place without hope, enslaved to Satan and his schemes. From the perspective of the cross, the prince of the world has been defeated.
- Before the cross, there was little power to overcome trials; but from the perspective of the cross, we can take courage for Jesus has overcome the world.